

Leave No One Behind: Roma reporting in the 2025 Sustainable Development Voluntary Reviews

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Across the globe, [communities discriminated against work and descent](#) (CDWD) have been left out of national sustainable development strategies and action plans. Ensuring “No one is left behind” in the developmental planning and implementation of the SDGs is one of the key priorities of the Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Decent.

For the last few years, the [Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Decent](#) as part of the UN Major Groups and Other Stakeholders, has been engaging in the National Voluntary Reviews (VNRs), presenting the viewpoint of our communities across the world (i.e., Roma, Haratins, Buraku, Dalits, Quilombola, etc.). GfOD has played a key role in supporting Roma organizations to draft and deliver Roma civil society statements and to prepare independent shadow reports evaluating SDG implementation and making Roma voices heard at the national and international level.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer an unprecedented global platform for advancing equality, fighting discrimination, and securing social inclusion for marginalized communities—including Europe’s Roma. Recognizing the interdependence of peace, justice, reduced inequalities, and inclusive societies, the SDGs directly address the structural barriers that hinder Roma participation and empowerment. The 2019 ERGO Network paper¹ emphasizes that SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) is particularly significant for Roma rights advocacy, and stresses the need for disaggregated data and for the implementation of indicators that directly impact Roma communities.

Key Reviews from Czechia, Bulgaria, Germany, and Finland

In 2025, four European countries with substantial Roma populations—Czechia, Bulgaria, Germany, and Finland—have submitted Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) on SDG progress. A central question is whether these reviews meaningfully include Roma concerns, or perpetuate exclusion.

Germany

A review of the official [2025 Voluntary National Review \(VNR\) report for Germany](#)² shows no explicit mentions of “Roma” and “Sinti” people. The report does not provide information, disaggregated data, or case studies specific to the inclusion, rights, or status of the Roma and

¹ [ROMA INCLUDED: Can the SDGs contribute to combating antigypsyism? – ERGO Network](#)

² [Germany's Third Voluntary National Review to the HLPF 2025](#)

Sinti communities within the SDG implementation framework. While the report broadly discusses concepts such as equality, inclusion, social participation, and the principle of “leaving no one behind,” these references are general and do not single out Roma or Sinti as national minorities or SDG target groups.

Finland

The [Finnish National VNR report](#)³ mentions Roma about 20 times. While the text reports the estimated size of Finland’s Roma population, there is a notable absence of disaggregated statistics concerning Roma outcomes on specific SDG indicators (e.g., education, health, poverty, employment). The Roma section leans heavily on the architecture and process of Roma inclusion, rather than results or measurable impact. There is no granular reporting on, for example, Roma children's educational attainment (SDG 4), access to health services (SDG 3), or employment rates (SDG 8).

Despite institutional sophistication, there is insufficient reflection on *actual progress or persistent gaps* in Roma socio-economic and cultural status, which would be essential for an SDG-oriented analysis. Yet, Finland positions its Roma policy as a model for rights-based and inclusive development. The Advisory Board’s integration into the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health strengthens cross-sectoral dialogue, crucial for SDG mainstreaming.

However, for full alignment with the SDGs—especially the drive for “leaving no one behind”—the reporting should be expanded to include regular publication of disaggregated data for Roma by SDG target area, evaluation of interventions for measurable outcomes (not just participation structures) and the identification of ongoing challenges (e.g., areas where Roma continue to experience disparities) alongside progress.

Bulgaria

The Second Voluntary Review (VNR) of Bulgaria in the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the period 2015-2024, shows significant achievements of all 17 SDGs, but also areas that require additional efforts and attention.

The [official report](#) has given particular attention to challenges encountered with Roma minorities in Bulgaria. Reporting on **Roma** in the Bulgarian VNR demonstrates both **acknowledgement of vulnerabilities** and **gaps in sectoral reporting**. The term “Roma” appears 23 times in a 174-page report. While this indicates recurring reference, coverage is generally dispersed and often grouped with other vulnerable communities (people with disabilities, elderly, etc.). It displays a pattern of **formal recognition of Roma vulnerabilities and significant policy planning**, especially in anti-poverty, health, and anti-discrimination strategies. However, reporting is **uneven**, with a *notable absence in education*, limited sectoral integration, and a tendency towards “add-on” rather

³ [Progress towards shared wellbeing of people and planet : Voluntary National Review 2025 FINLAND. Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)

than *mainstreamed Roma inclusion*. The frequent grouping of Roma with other vulnerable populations often dilutes specific analysis of the systemic barriers they face, especially regarding school segregation and structural discrimination.

As estimated, 270 000 Bulgarian people belonging to Romani are in a particularly marginalized position. People in this community experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including discrimination based on work and descent and their situation requires dedicated attention and targeted legislative and policy interventions.

Adequate and timely data on Bulgaria's Roma population is largely absent from the official report and national statistics, rendering many Roma effectively invisible in education, socio-economic, and health data at the national level. In 2023, the Roma ethnic group faced the highest risk of poverty, with an at-risk-of-poverty rate of 65.0% ([Poverty and Social Inclusion Indicators, 2023](#)). Roma also accounted for the highest proportion of individuals living in poverty (30.9%) and had the lowest employment rate at 34.0%. Across all major ethnic groups, education strongly influences poverty risk: higher educational attainment significantly reduces the likelihood of poverty among employed individuals. Alarming, 77.0% of Roma children experience material deprivation. Education is therefore a critical area for investment to advance SDG 3 and improve Roma inclusion. However, Roma students continue to suffer from school segregation and lack access to quality education. Addressing these challenges requires innovative approaches to education, modernization of school infrastructure, and enhanced teacher training.

Bulgaria needs to foster and develop the methodologies, guidelines and research needed to build a national repository of data and standards to measure equity in education, socio-economical and health among Roma. This information is vital to help countries, UN partners and civil society groups to effectively reach the most marginalised groups.

The National Strategy of the Republic of Bulgaria for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma (2021-2030), adopted in 2022, needs clear strengthening and focus on areas such as: sustaining income growth for the poorest; promoting social, economical and political inclusion, ensuring equal opportunities; reducing social inequalities.

Deny Doborov of the World Roma Federation delivered the civil society statement as a response to the government report emphasizing that *“Romani women remain significantly underrepresented in both gender and Roma policy discussions. Their invisibility weakens SDG 5 implementation, as Romani women face significantly higher poverty rates and persistent gender gaps in employment and discrimination.”*⁴

Czechia

⁴ See [Systemic Discrimination and Resilience: Roma Women's Fight for Justice in Bulgaria](#)

The [Czech Republic VNR 2025 report](#)⁵ includes several references to the Roma community, especially in the context of social inclusion, anti-discrimination, employment, education, and national strategies for integration:

The report demonstrates a clear recognition of the Roma community as a significant national minority facing persistent social exclusion and poverty. It appropriately links Roma-related challenges to key SDGs.

In addition, there is a noticeable focus on describing strategic frameworks and policy intentions, yet little substantive presentation of recent, measurable progress or ongoing challenges. Key indicators such as changes in school segregation, employment rates, or health disparities among Roma receive limited attention. i.e., *“In the 2023/2024 school year, there were 16 schools in the Czech Republic where Roma children made up more than 90% of the pupils, 16 schools had 75% of Roma children, and 46 had 50%.”*



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As civil society actors committed to rights-based development, we welcome Czechia's VNR and the opportunity to reaffirm our shared obligation to leave no one behind. But inclusion must not be symbolic — it must be procedural, measurable, and accountable. While we recognize progress in areas such as education and environmental policy, structural inequalities persist. Roma communities, as part of the global family of CDWD remain disproportionately affected by antigypsyism, educational segregation, housing exclusion, and limited access to political and economic participation. Discrimination continues to obstruct SDGs 10, 4, 11, and 16. Roma must not be reduced to data points. We are rights-holders and co-authors of Czechia's sustainable future. This requires meaningful participation in SDG design, monitoring, and evaluation.

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GABRIELA HRABANOVA
Director of European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network

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In relation to SDG 5, the report mentions the compensation mechanism for victims of forced (in the report “involuntary”) sterilization of Roma women. While this recognition and the

⁵ [VNR 2025 Czech Republic Report.pdf](#)

compensation initiative represent important steps toward addressing past injustices, the report lacks detail on the pace and accessibility of the compensation process. Delays risk denying timely justice to survivors, many of whom may be unaware or face bureaucratic obstacles in claiming their rights. Furthermore, the report does not discuss complementary measures needed to prevent recurrence and to address broader structural inequalities affecting Roma women. Without transparent monitoring and stronger implementation, this mechanism risks remaining symbolic rather than an effective remedy aligned with the goals of equality and justice.

At the policy level, the VNR shows close alignment with existing national and European Union frameworks, such as the “Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2021-2030.” Furthermore, the report acknowledges ongoing efforts to collect disaggregated data related to the Roma population, a critical step for monitoring progress and tailoring effective interventions.

Moreover, the inclusion of Roma issues in the report remains somewhat siloed, concentrated largely in sections related to education and social inequality. Other critical SDG areas such as health, housing, justice, and environmental concerns receive minimal attention in relation to Roma communities. This suggests that Roma inclusion is not yet fully mainstreamed across the breadth of SDG implementation, limiting integrated and comprehensive policy responses.

Gabriela Hrabanova (ERGO Network) delivered the [Czech civil society statement at the VNR session](#) during the High Level Political Forum, saying that Roma as communities discriminate don work and descent *“must not be reduced to data points. We are rights-holders and co-authors of Czechia’s sustainable future. This requires meaningful participation in SDG design, monitoring, and evaluation.”*

Inclusion or Exclusion? Roma and the 2025 SDG Reviews

While all four countries reference Roma in their SDG reporting and highlight various policy measures, the quality and depth of inclusion vary. The mainstreaming of Roma into national SDG strategies is slowly advancing, but remains insufficient in all four countries. While national frameworks and dedicated strategies exist, the real test lies in implementation, data-driven monitoring, and the meaningful inclusion of Roma voices across all SDG domains. Structural discrimination and antigypsyism persist, yet the SDGs, alongside active civil society engagement, provide an evolving architecture to hold governments accountable and accelerate the realization of rights and inclusion for Roma communities.