Investing in our future: What work(s) for young Roma?

Results from an online questionnaire

European Roma Grassroots Organizations Network 2017

#InvestinyoungRoma  I  #InvestinfutureEurope  I  #Decentwork4all

Being unemployed IS NOT part of my CULTURE!
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Executive summary

ERGO Network was interested to find out the employment status of young Roma (16-30) given their level of education and geographical location, and understand how the level of education impacts their ambitions for further careers, including self-employment. The questionnaire was targeting young Roma mainly from Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The questionnaire has been designed in English and with the help of ERGO members has been translated into their local languages. The questionnaires were open during the period August-September 2017.

For the purpose of this report, the snowball non-sampling methodology was deployed, which relies on referrals from NGOs and initial respondents. Therefore, the conclusions are not representative for the total population and the results generate hypothesis for the causes and barriers of Roma youth unemployment that further need to be confirmed. However, the report provides insights into the phenomenon of youth unemployment amongst Roma.

The findings show that the majority of our respondents are employed or students, with low percentages of unemployed or self-employed. On the one hand, this shows that there are Roma young people who are getting educated and contribute to the economies they are part of. On the other hand, it is noticeable that disadvantaged Roma youth (given their parental level of education and their occupation) have high chances of being unemployed. Unemployed youth are not engaged in educational activities; therefore, they are part of the NEETs category (not in employment, education or training).

One of the most important conclusions from this dataset is that young Roma think that there are no real employment opportunities in their area, either in general or for Roma. Besides this, they consider the lack of proper education/training and the lack of work experience as two of the main factors obstructing the employment of Roma youth. The other structural factors are the general labour market situation in their area, including low wages, corruption and nepotism.

Most of the respondents are not familiar with the different employment support tools such as employment offices or other programs, initiatives and funds supporting youth employment. These findings are surprising, considering the national and EU-level strategies, initiatives and plans aiming to enhance youth employment.

Based on the input from the young people through this research instrument, Roma youth demand their governments to provide more jobs for youth by increasing the support for youth entrepreneurship through easier access to loans and an investment into obtaining business skills of young people, as well as better information about the possibilities of entrepreneurship for young people. They also ask their governments to improve the collaboration between educational institutions and employment offices in order to make the support offered to young Roma and young people in general more known, transparent and accessible. Besides this, Roma youngsters want their governments to support different types of paid internships which would allow them to gain practical experience, to ensure a level of wages for young employees that would allow them to live a decent and independent life, and last but not least to ensure that employers do not refuse applicants because of their skin colour.
Background

After the global financial crisis of 2008, youth unemployment in general has risen worldwide. The situation of youth on the labour market in CEE countries is a new phenomenon that gains significant importance, not just because unemployment rates exceed 40%, but also because of the increasing social riots taking place in these countries. The sustainability of current social protection systems depends on the employment of young people, first and foremost the pension systems. At the same time investing in youth is essential for the development of cohesive and peaceful societies, economic growth and social development. Furthermore, there is a lack of studies analysing the situation of youth on the labour market, especially in the case of vulnerable groups who are twice as likely to be unemployed.

In addition, according to Eurostat migration of young people from CEE countries is on the rise, and students are “attacking” the labour market in Western Europe in the hope for a better future. The crisis is even more serious because of its knock-on effect, because unemployment often leads to young people being without pensions and social security contributions, diminishing social networks and limited opportunities for independence. High youth unemployment does not only mean increased social problems and a waste of productivity; it signifies falling birth rates and intergenerational tension between parents and their thirty something children who are still living at home.

Considering the multilevel governance approach in the European Union, on the one hand there are European-wide youth employment initiatives (e.g. Youth Guarantee), which have no binding character on the Member States but express their explicit commitment to enhancing youth employment. At the national level on the other hand, Member States have put in place national strategies and measures for youth employment (e.g. National Employment Strategy 2014-2020), either initiated through EU frameworks or because of other national priorities, problems or goals. In theory, Roma youth should be eligible to benefit from these employment measures in their countries of residence, explicitly or not. However, these measures have difficulties to address so-called hard-to-reach groups because the actors responsible for implementing employment policies and measures are affected by institutional antigypsyism and are not equipped to reach out to Roma.

The European Commission midterm review of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies\(^1\) shows that despite growing general employment levels, changes in Roma employment levels are small or even negative. Compared to 2011, the NEET rate among young Roma in 2016 remains alarmingly high and has even risen in several Member States: 51-77 % in Spain, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Romania, Czech Republic and Croatia, with only Portugal showing a clear decline. On top of this, the employment gap between Roma men (widest in EL, RO, PT and HU) and women “is not sufficiently addressed”.

\(^{1}\) COM (2017) 458
Objectives of the questionnaire

In order to understand the underlying causes of the low Roma youth employment rate, but also to inspire practitioners and policy makers to invest in employment opportunities for young Roma, ERGO Network, in cooperation with its member and partner organizations, engaged in a fact-finding research in five EU countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. This research is a component of a campaign that ERGO Network prepared to mobilize support for investing in employment opportunities for young Roma. The campaign was launched in November 2017 - at the ERGO Network Public Event, where the results of this research were presented for the first time, and at the EU Roma Platform 2017 through specific campaign activities centred on views and messages of young Roma themselves, explored and developed at the ERGO Summer Academy. The Academy took place in August 2017 and gathered a group of around 20 young Roma to explore the access to the labour market for Roma young people from different angles and discuss what employment measures work for Roma youth.

In addition to the desk and the field research, an online questionnaire has been developed to triangulate the qualitative research, but also to reach out to other Roma youngsters, who due to logistical practicalities (time resources, etc.) could not be interviewed and directly engaged in the research.

ERGO Network wants to make heard the voice of young Roma and give them the chance to have their input in policies that target them.

Methodology

ERGO Network was interested to find out the employment status of young Roma (16-30) given their level of education and geographical location, and understand how the level of education impacts their ambitions for further careers, including self-employment. The research was targeting 100 young Roma mainly from Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Besides the age limit and the declared ethnicity, there was no further sampling procedure. We received 156 responses to the questionnaire. The responses in which the respondents did not declare themselves as Roma and which were out of the age limit were not considered in the final data analysis.

For the purpose of this report, the snowball non-sampling methodology was deployed, which relies on referrals from NGOs and initial respondents, as this was the most cost–effective method. Therefore, the conclusions are not representative for the total population and the results generate hypothesis for the causes and barriers of Roma youth unemployment that further need to be confirmed. However, despite the biases raised from the methodological point of view, this report provides insights into the phenomenon of youth unemployment amongst Roma.

The questionnaire has been designed in English and with the help of ERGO members has been translated into their local languages: Bulgarian, Hungarian, Romanian, Czech and Slovak. The questionnaires were open during the period August-September 2017. They were distributed via e-mail to different Roma and pro-Roma youth NGOs, but also to well established and renowned international Roma NGOs. ERGO members have also facilitated the distribution of the questionnaire in their national language on social media, especially in Roma related social media groups.
Besides the selective participation, the disadvantages of having an online questionnaire, especially one targeting Roma, are the following: Certain populations are less likely to have internet access, but also access to the questionnaire link. It cannot be claimed therefore that this is probability/random sample. Even though certain demographic characteristics are not known from the questionnaire (income, living conditions, etc.), it cannot be claimed that the sample is representative and therefore some of the results might be misleading considering the profile of our respondents. Besides these, like in any other case of web-administered questionnaire, there was no interviewer to clarify certain questions or provide further guidance.

Among the advantages of having a web administered questionnaire is the fact that we succeeded to have a relatively high rate of Roma youth respondents given the allocated timeframe. The questionnaire created new data on Roma youth without reproducing the existing statistics. Most importantly, the information comes directly from the respondents without being aggregated or simply estimated. Last but not least, it should be mentioned that no incentives were offered in order to avoid survey fraud.

The questionnaire has been developed with Google Forms and comprises six parts (see Annex 1). The personal details part includes aspects related to nationality and ethnic affiliation, age, gender, marital status, but also aspect related to parental level of education and parental occupation.

The second part is a general employment introductory section, common to all respondents. It includes aspects related to the labour market situation in their area/community (employment opportunities, barriers, the relationship with the public employment offices) but also normative questions regarding the role of the government in supporting youth employment or business development. Depending on the activity that best corresponds to respondents’ situation, they have been divided into four main categories which become sections by themselves.

Respondents who claim they are currently studying have filled the third part of the questionnaire. The questions in this section referred to the level of education pursued, whether the student worked during their studies, future employment plans and how the school/university helps career choice or finding employment.

Respondents who claimed they are not employed have filled the fourth section. We wanted to know what type of activities the respondent is engaged in: whether they are engaged in training, in home duties, etc. Besides this, respondents were asked how they are looking for a job and what type of job they would like to get, what they consider to be the main obstacles in finding a job, whether they are available for work and willing to move for it, how many jobs they applied for or how many interviews they went to.

The fifth section focusses on employed youth. First, we wanted to know what type of employment the respondents are engaged in (long/short term contract, sector) but also how they found that job, what made them a suitable candidate for that job, how many jobs they had before and whether the respondent moved for their job.

The last section is about self-employment. We wanted to know what type of businesses the respondents are running (e.g. non-registered business, freelancer, independent business owner, etc.), the sector in which the business operates, its size, but also questions related to the business landscape in the country/region: how difficult or not it is to get a loan or the main problems in starting a business.
Analysis

Demographic characteristics

The survey respondents come from the initially targeted countries, mainly **Central Eastern Europe** with most of the respondents from Romania (40%), Bulgaria (24%), Hungary (19%), Slovakia (12%) and Czech Republic (5%). In terms of gender, 63% of the respondents identified themselves as females and 37% as males.

**Figure 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents**

All the respondents are between 16 and 30 years old, with an average age of 24, and a standard deviation of 3.8. In terms of marital status, 67% of the respondents have never been married, whereas 11% are married, and the rest are living together with their partners, are divorced or separated, or in another relationship status. In terms of children, 91% of the respondents have no children, with few cases in which respondents have 1 or 2 children.

**Figure 2: Father’s level of education**
In order to approximate the socio-economic background of the respondents we included two questions about their parents’ level of education and about their occupational status. Other studies in the field of youth employment, e.g. Dubow et al. (2009), have shown that there is a positive relation between parents’ levels of education and parents’ expectations for their children’s success, suggesting that more highly educated parents actively encourage their children to develop high expectations of their own. The first observation here was that more than half of the parents have elementary, secondary and vocational degrees. Moreover, it could be noticed that there is no gap between mothers and fathers level of education, except when it comes to higher education, with fathers being around five times more likely than mothers to have a higher education degree (e.g. 20% in Romania).

When it comes to parental occupation, the situation of Roma mothers is far worse. Despite the rather similar level of education with Roma fathers, the mothers are mainly housewives. Despite this, there are several areas in which Roma women are fairly represented: the medical sector (nurse, mediator), self-employment, commerce, in the textile industry, but also in the social sphere such as social worker, security guard, etc.

Figure 3: Mother’s occupation

It is clear however, that Roma fathers are mainly engaged in physical, manual jobs, with construction workers in the highest percentage followed by a high level of unemployment. One of the most popular fields of employment among Roma fathers is commerce, with most of them working as

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salesmen, shop assistants, shopkeepers, being self-employed in this area. There is also a strong representation of Roma fathers working in physical jobs, including daily workers or factory workers. It can furthermore be noticed that there is a relatively fair number of Roma teachers, drivers, with few Roma employed in professional jobs (e.g. director, inspector, project manager).

**Figure 4: Father’s occupation**

![Figure 4: Father’s occupation](image)

### General employment situation

When asked whether there are enough employment opportunities in their area, the opinions are quite diverse.

A high percentage of the respondents from Romania and Hungary stated that there are enough employment opportunities for everyone in their countries.

In Slovakia Romania and Bulgaria, a relatively high percentage of the respondents believed that there are no real employment opportunities for Roma.

A fair share of the Bulgarian respondents claimed there are no real employment opportunities for anyone, with lower shares of Romanians (6%) and Slovaks (2%) sharing the same opinion.

A somehow smaller percentage agreed that there are employment opportunities, but for educated people only: a quarter of the Bulgarian respondents, followed by 6% in Hungary, respectively 8% in Romania.
Figure 5: Employment opportunities: perspectives of Roma youth

When asked about **the main obstacles stopping young people from finding work in their area** we could identify several categories of reasons:

- Firstly, most of the respondents mentioned the **lack of education** or professional training, skills, low salaries, the lack of work experience but also the lack of employment opportunities, or the **economic situation** in general.
- Secondly, from a **social perspective**, the respondents mentioned corruption, lack of transparency and nepotism in the labour market, but also a high level of discrimination and prejudices from the employers’ side or the employers’ flexibility in selecting the employee.
- Thirdly, there are **individual attitudes and determinations**. There was a relatively high percentage of respondents who claimed that there are situations in which Roma young people are not motivated enough to fight for a job, with young people being indifferent towards a job with a low salary compared to their qualifications or needs.
- Last but not least, there are some situations in which the respondents mentioned **structural issues** such as their local labour market situation, the working condition and also issues related to commuting.
Nepotism. Employers are very picky when it’s about experience, skin colour and on top there is a low salary.

Roma, 28yr, Romania

From the majority side the discrimination. From the Roma side the low level of education.

Roma, 26yr, Czech Republic

I believe that the main reasons which stop young Roma to find a job are the following: the colour of their skin, the way they address certain people/institutions, the level of education, lack of experience (What I am trying to understand and what really disturbs me is that employers want young employees, however they do not accept them because they have no work experience).

Roma, 19yr, Romania

Young people do not have the experience and employers want experienced people and they give them low salaries.

Roma, 28yr, Romania

There are no employment opportunities. Most of the youngsters are either in Bucharest or abroad. My county, Giurgiu, is one of the counties with the highest unemployment rate.

Roma, 28yr, Romania

The current government has created a situation in the labor market (public work) that is not at all suitable for young people. No progress, even if you are somewhere, you are only a statistical figure. Chaotic system requirements. Sometimes professional experience is not taken into account in several places. There are no available jobs in various sectors.

Rom, 21yr, Hungary

The job offer is not transparent. When somebody finds out about a job, in most of the cases that job is taken by somebody who has some connection with that employer.

Roma, 22yr, Romania

Connections are on the verge.

When it comes to the role of the government in helping young people to get employed, the consensus is that governments should provide more jobs or create better working conditions by:

- Investing in youth employment
- Supporting the integration of Roma in the labour market (including the fight against antigypsyism)
- Investing in self-employment through easier access to loans
- Helping entrepreneurs to develop their businesses through better information and support
- Improving cooperation between educational institutions and the employment offices
- Providing/supporting paid internships for young people
- Increasing the wages

As far as the relationship with the employment offices are concerned, around 60% of the respondents (RO, SK, BG) are not registered within the employment office or have never asked anything from them. Smaller percentages contacted or visited the employment offices for information on vacancies (HU 13%, SK 23%, RO 18%) or for training and education opportunities (around 11-13%).
Figure 6: Have you ever refused a job?

When asked whether they have ever refused a job, **56% of the respondents claimed that they have never refused a job**, whereas the rest did (high percentages in Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria). The main reasons for refusing a job refer to the low wages offered and a mismatch of qualification (over/under-qualification). Lower percentages claim that the work was not interesting. Few respondents claimed that they had a better job offer.

Figure 7: Familiarity with employment support

In terms of how familiar they are with self-employment/employment support, 63% claimed they are not familiar with any measure - with high percentages in Romania – 24% and Bulgaria – 16%. The rest of 35% who know about any type of employment support rated it as follows:

- Romania: 20-28% of the respondents evaluated it as good to great support
- Bulgaria: 21-30% of the respondents evaluated it as fair
- Czech Republic: 27-36% of the respondents evaluated it as bad to fair
- Hungary: 40% of the respondents evaluated it as great
- Slovakia: 27-33% of the respondents evaluated it as fair to great
When asked whether the respondents feel that the education/training they received is useful in getting a job it seems there is an agreement that the **educational preparation was useful for getting employed**: 10-30% in Slovakia claim that the education received was useful to fair. In Romania and Hungary there is no consensus on this (e.g. in Romania 20% claim it was not useful at all, whereas 30% claim that it was very important), whereas in Bulgaria and Czech Republic there is a consensus that education was very useful.

Figure 8: Activity status of the respondents

Coming back to the **profiles of the participants**, we have an almost equal representation of respondents being employed and students (RO 16% employed and 19% students, BG 6% employed and 16% students, CZ 3% employed, SK 7% students and 4% employed, and HU 7% students and 11% employed), followed by around 10% of the total respondents as unemployed and around 5% self-employed, and 1 person with disabilities.

In the next part we will shortly describe each of these categories and look at how they perceive the existing opportunities and challenges of Roma youth employment and share their experiences.
Young students

What are the students studying?

In Slovakia, most of the respondents are enrolled in some form of secondary education and the rest of them are enrolled in a higher education institution. In Hungary, 50% are enrolled in some form of secondary education, 9% enrolled in a higher education institution, and the rest in vocational education. In the Czech Republic 3% are enrolled in a higher education institution and the rest in some form of secondary education. In Bulgaria, there is more diversity: a rather high representation of secondary students, followed by 5% university and vocational education students, respectively. In Romania, there is a strong representation of university students (30%), followed by postgraduate students (9%); the rest are enrolled in vocational education.

Figure 9: Level of education

When it comes to the parental level of education, most of the fathers of these students have secondary education (50%), 22% university education, followed by vocational studies, and in a few cases fathers have elementary or no education (1-2 cases). The pattern for mothers’ education is similar with regards to secondary education; however, mothers have lower percentages of university education and also higher percentage of elementary education, around 10%. This situation confirms the theory according to which educated parents are more likely to encourage their children to have higher levels of education.

In terms of gender, 63% of the respondents are women. As far as the age of the total respondents in this category is concerned, most of the students are between 19 and 22 years old.

Out of the total students only 35 respondents claimed they have worked during their studies. Usually they worked in sales (e.g. shop assistant), in services (e.g. bars, restaurants), the NGO sector, agriculture or construction. All jobs were paid.

Yes. I have been working as a temporary worker for 3 years. I started when I was in a senior year in high school in Kaufland as a shop assistant behind the counter, there I could earn more than 180 EUR/month (2.5 EUR/h). When I came to the university in Bratislava, I started to work in Sport Direct where I earned 200 EUR/month (3.5 EUR/h). Then I found a job in an accounting firm where I am at the moment and I get 220 EUR/month (3.5 EUR/h), during the summer holidays even 300 EUR.

Roma, 22yr, Slovakia
I am looking for a job. Now, I am considering to apply for a program from the NGO Leader that prepares leaders for the community, also I am planning to save money to do a Master’s degree.

Roma, 22yr, Bulgaria

When asked about their plan after graduation, more than half said that they would like to find a job and get employed, whereas 8% feel the need to get practical experience through internships before looking for a job. Around 30% of the students would like to pursue further education and training, whereas low percentages want to start a business. Of course, there are cases in which the student does not know what to do next.

When asked whether they have started looking for a job, most of the respondents answer that they have not started yet. 77% of those who have started looking for a job have done so by checking different job ads, seeking assistance of friends, relatives, colleagues, trade unions etc., asking directly different firms or getting the support of their educational institution. Lower percentages have attended job fairs or asked the help of the employment office.

As far as the importance and role of the educational institutions and their contribution in getting employed are concerned, 30% of the students believe that the studies they are pursuing will not help them to get a job. The rest of the respondents believed that the field of study they are pursuing, the teachers’ approach, the content and the practical approach will help them to get a job. There were several cases in which the students made references to the fact that their educational institution already has some component/activities which target the students’ future employment, such as:

- Mentoring, counselling, workshops
- Partnership with different universities
- Internships with potential employers
- Presenting job offers brought by businesses interested in services provided by educational institution
- Organizing visits with potential employers
- Communicating vacancies by email
As mentioned above, the parental level of education proves to be an influential factor for children’s educational aspirations, with most of the parents having secondary education.

Another important aspect is that Roma young people are willing to start working in parallel with their studies. As noticed, most of the jobs were in services, a sector predominantly favoured by students in general during their studies.

One of the most important findings here is the fact that most of the students are planning to start looking for a job after they graduate, showing the Roma young people want to work. As the results have shown, they also want to complement their studies with practical experience in their field before entering the labour market.

**Unemployed youth**

As mentioned above, **10% of the total number of respondents are unemployed**, with high levels of unemployment in Bulgaria, followed by Romania and Slovakia. Most of the respondents are between **19 and 30 years old**, and are mainly **women**. Their **parents** have elementary education and are either unemployed (mostly fathers) or are doing some kind of physical work.

When asked which of the following best describes their unemployed status, 96% of the respondents answered that they are **available and actively looking for a job**, whereas 2% claimed they are engaged in home duties (including child care), and the rest are either engaged in some form of unpaid family work and one person cannot work due to their disability. The majority of the respondents have never refused a job. When it comes to gender, **75% of the respondents are women** (most of them from Bulgaria) with elementary or secondary education, with their mothers’ occupations being e.g. house wife or seamstress and their fathers engaged in physical work.

When asked about the **main obstacles in finding a good job**, most of the respondents blamed the low employment opportunities in their area, low wages that would not be enough to cover their needs, but also the fact that they do not have the right work experience or that working conditions in the available jobs were bad. Lower percentages answered that they didn’t learn the right things in their education or that they were considered too young/old for those jobs.

With regards to the way in which this category **looks for jobs**, almost all respondents ticked the “Seeking assistance of friends, relatives, colleagues, unions, etc.” option. The second most popular options were job fairs and the assistance from education or training institutions.

Most of the respondents (40%) are available and actively looking for a job for the last 1-2 months, 30% for the last 3-6 months, and the others for more than 6 months. Moreover, **75% of the respondents answered that if a job would be available now they would be ready to start immediately, whereas the rest have said they would not be available but they would consider starting to work.**
When asked whether they would like to become self-employed, most of the respondents answered that they are not sure, 37% claimed that they would like to start their own business, while the rest claimed that they would not like to do this.

As far as the preferences for a job sector are concerned, the respondents’ opinions are quite diverse, fluctuating between professional jobs (e.g. manager, teacher, etc.), technical job (e.g. engineer, operator, etc.), manual jobs (e.g. construction, agriculture, etc.), with less preference for administrative jobs (e.g. officer, receptionist, etc.).

Interestingly enough, 98% of the respondents claimed that they are willing to move their place of residence in order to find work, with most preferring the option to move to the capital, followed by another town in their country; around 30% would consider moving to another country.

Most respondents in this category (50%) said that since they started looking for work, they have applied for around 5 jobs (60% BG, 50% RO), followed by 25% who applied for more than 20 jobs (100% SK). In a few cases the respondents have not applied for any job and in one case the respondent claims they have applied for hundreds of jobs. Out of the ones who have applied, half of them have never had an interview (63% BG, 67% HU), whereas 45% had between 1 and 5 interviews (33% HU, RO 100%), and more than 10 interviews (mainly in SK 100%).

In conclusion, the unemployed Roma young people come from disadvantaged families (considering the parental level of education and occupation), with a high probability of coming from disadvantaged areas (considering the fact that they claimed there are no employment opportunities in their area and that they are willing to move for a job). It is interesting here that almost all of them are available and actively looking for a job, have already started applying for jobs and are willing to move for a job.
Employed youth

As mentioned before, one of the biggest categories of respondents is made up by employed youth. From each of the represented countries the proportion of employed respondents is the following: RO 16%, BG 6%, CZ 3%, SK 4%, and HU 11% employed.

In terms of gender, more than half of the respondents in this category are women. Out of the total respondents 58% of them affirmed they were never married; an almost similar percentage are married or living together with a partner, usually without children (8 persons have one child and 1 person has 2 children).

Out of the total respondents in this category, 54% declared that they **work for a wage on a long-term contract**, whereas 39% work on a **short-term contract** and the rest are paid through internships or other ways. As the figure shows, most of the jobs are professional jobs - 42% (66% CZ, 42% HU, 36% RO, 33% SK), followed by administrative jobs – 28% (28% in RO and HU, 38% BG, 6% SK), manual jobs – 12% (18% BG, 33% SK), and 7% technical jobs (16% CZ, 7% in RO and HU).
When asked how they found their job, most of the respondents mentioned either the assistance of friends, relatives, colleagues, unions, etc. (BG 45%, CZ 33%, SK 26%, RO 23%, HU 35%), the direct application to employers (CZ 50%, SK 33%, RO 42%, HU 35%), or through training/educational institutions (RO and BG 15-18%).

When asked whether they had to move for their job, 65% of the respondents claimed they did not move (100% CZ, 78% HU, 86% SK, 56% RO), whereas 16 claimed they had to move to another country (13% SK, 20% RO) and 10% moved to the capital city (10% BG, 7% RO). A smaller percentage (7%) claimed they moved to another town (10% BG, 12% RO) and one person moved to a rural area.

I had good connections and appropriate qualifications!
Roma, 18yr, Hungary

One has to make sure he/she has the necessary qualifications for that job, and also there should be some work experience and skills so that he/she can cope with the work.
Roma, 26yr, Romania

My constant effort, hard work, perseverance and my knowledge in the field.
Roma, 28yr, Bulgaria

In addition to the qualifications and experience, language skills and personal qualities count, too (open-minded, continuous self-improvement / learning, motivation).
Roma, 30yr, Hungary

Most of the respondents in this category claimed that they have applied for around 5 jobs before getting into their current job (83% CZ, 80% BG, 78% RO, 46% HU), whereas 22% have applied for 5-10 jobs (20% HU), 20% have applied for more than 10 jobs (20% HU, 10% BG). 12% were lucky enough and made it with the first try, and the rest of 9% applied to more than 20 jobs (16% CZ).

A final question for this category of respondents referred to whether they feel supported to grow in their current job. As such, 59% of the respondents

When asked what made them a suitable candidate for the job, most respondents answered that it was their skills (e.g. foreign languages, communication skills) and the level of education (e.g. proper qualifications).

Besides this category, most of the respondents believed that their dedication, determination, motivation and ambition for getting that job were the success factors.

A last category mentioned that they were successful thanks to personal qualities such as seriousness, responsibility, trustworthiness, sociability, adaptability or team spirit.
said they feel supported (61% RO, 66% CZ, 45% BG, 35% HU), whereas around 20% said no (21% HU, 45% BG, 16% RO, 46% SK), and the rest maybe (42% HU, 21% RO, 40% SK).

The employed youth category was the predominant category among our respondents. It shows once again that Roma young people want to and can work! Most of them have a long-term contract and are engaged in professional jobs. From their responses, it is clear that in order to be part of this category, one has to achieve a certain level of education and skills, but also to have the right work experience. As the figures above show, one needs to either have the appropriate qualification for the job, or needs to have quite a rich social capital for making it onto the labour market.

**Self-employed youth**

The last category of respondents in our questionnaire targeted self-employed young people. This category represents 5% of the total respondents. The participants come from Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, and two non-EU countries (Albania and Macedonia). In terms of gender, there is an equal representation of women and men, 99% being unmarried or living together with their partner, and having no children.

When asked whether they know of any support that aims to encourage young people to start their own business, 70% of them said they do not know. When asked how they would evaluate such support, there was a consensus among the respondents that the specific support is fair or relevant.

The majority of the respondents identified themselves as freelancers, 25% as independent business owners, and the rest as non-registered business owners or occasional entrepreneurs (e.g. recycling). All of the self-employed respondents claimed that they operate in their area of residence.

As far as the sector is concerned, 50% operate in the services sector, 25% in the administrative sector, and the rest in the cultural and social sectors.

The Romanian respondents agreed that in their country it is somewhat difficult to obtain a loan, whereas in Bulgaria the situation is better. In Hungary, there was no consensus among the respondents, whereas in Albania or Macedonia it is very difficult.

In all the countries the respondents claimed that it is burdensome to start a business, with the main problems being the lack of finance and the lack of specific business skills.

**Conclusions and recommendations**

The majority of our respondents are employed or students, with lower percentages of unemployed or self-employed young people. This shows that there are Roma young people who are educated and contribute to the economies they are part of. Looking at the data for the unemployed respondents, it is however noticeable that disadvantaged Roma with lower educated parents have a higher risk of being unemployed. All of them are in the NEET category and a high number is not in contact with the public employment services in their countries.

One of the most important conclusions from this dataset is that Roma young people think that there are no real employment opportunities in their area, either in general or for Roma. Besides this, they consider the lack of proper education/training and the lack of work experience as two of the main factors obstructing the employment of Roma youth. The other structural factors are the general labour market situation in their area, including low wages, corruption and nepotism.
Most of the respondents are not familiar with employment offices and their different support tools or other programmes, initiatives and funds supporting youth employment. These findings are surprising, considering the amount of national and EU-level strategies, initiatives and plans aiming to enhance youth employment. Not knowing of public employment services and thus not registering in times of unemployment can lead to a vicious circle of precariousness for the young people, who in many countries will not be eligible for other social services if they not registered as unemployed.

In order to develop more effective employment measures and reach out to different groups of young people in order to include them on the labour market, the views of the young beneficiaries themselves need to be taken into account in policymaking and the evaluation of programmes and initiatives.

In line with the role of civil society to reflect their constituents’ concerns towards policy makers and according to our participatory approach that brings Roma grassroots realities to the EU level, ERGO Network transmits further the key messages the respondents put forward through the questionnaire.

As such, the young people ask their governments to provide more support for young Roma and other young people to enter the labour market by:

- Increasing the support for **youth entrepreneurship** by facilitating a simpler access to loans and other microfinance instruments and by investing into building business skills of young people, as well as better information about the possibilities of entrepreneurship for young people.
- Improving the **cooperation between educational institutions and NGOs and employment offices** in order to make support offered to young Roma and young people in general more known, transparent and accessible.
- Ensuring a level of **wages** for young employees that allow them to live a decent and independent life.
- Supporting the availability of **paid internships** or other paid programmes that enable young Roma to gain necessary work experience.
- Ensuring that employers do not refuse applicants because of their ethnicity, combatting **antigypsyism** on the labour market.

Such measures would not be possible without the EU’s support and assistance to the Member States, through its key actions and financing. ERGO Network urges the European Union to:

- Reform the European Youth Guarantee and the Youth Employment Initiative by giving particular attention to hard-to-reach social groups. This can include in particular:
  - Better targeting of training programmes specifically for vulnerable groups.
  - Specific trainings for Public Employment Services (PES) on how to reach out to and deal with vulnerable groups.
  - A more flexible and accessible registration process of public employment services that ensures that no young person falls through the gaps and remains out of the social systems of their country.
  - More partnerships with educational institutions and NGOs who can more easily reach out to Roma and other vulnerable groups as public employment services. This requires dedicated funding that will allow these partners to support the PES and convince young people to register with PES, or to directly establish contacts with employers and support the skills development of young people.
- Include specific targets for Roma employment in the Social Scoreboard of the European Pillar of Social Rights in order to measure progress of EU Member States in delivering on their commitments.
- Ask EU Member States to put in place concrete strategies to combat antigypsyism on the labour market, both from the side of employers and from employment agencies. Public Employment Services often don’t only lack the skills to work with hard-to-reach groups of young people, but additionally are not sufficiently addressing antigypsyism inside their own working structures. We therefore propose to initiate antigypsyism trainings for employees of PES in order to raise their awareness and skills for non-discriminatory treatment of Roma clients.
- Put greater emphasis on youth in the EU Roma Framework 2020-2027, in particular on their transition from education to employment, and ensure that EU Member States make youth employment a priority in their National Roma Integration Strategies.
Annex
Questionnaire

1. Personal details
1.1. What is your nationality?
1.2. Are you Roma?
1.3. How old are you?
1.4. Gender
1.5. Marital status
1.6. Do you have children? If yes, how many?
1.7. Where do you live
1.8. What is the highest level of education of your father?
   a) No schooling
   b) Elementary education
   c) Vocational education
   d) Secondary education
   e) University
   f) Post-graduate studies
   g) Other
1.9. What is the highest level of education of your mother?
   a) No schooling
   b) Elementary education
   c) Vocational education
   d) Secondary education
   e) University
   f) Post-graduate studies
   g) Other
1.10. What are the last occupations of your father?
1.11. What are the last occupations of your mother?

2. Introduction: general employment situation
2.1. Do you feel there are enough employment opportunities in your area?
   a) There are enough employment opportunities for everyone
   b) There are no real employment opportunities for Roma
   c) There are no real employment opportunities for anyone
   d) There are employment opportunities for educated people only
   e) Other
2.2. What do you think are the main things stopping young people from finding work in your area?
2.3. What do you think the government should be doing to help youth get employed?
2.4. Have you received any advice/help/assistance from the employment services? Check all that apply
   a) None, because there is no employment office
   b) Information on vacancies
   c) Advice on how to search for job
   d) None, because I didn't ask
   e) Guidance on education and training opportunities
   f) Placement at education/training programmes
   g) Other
2.5. Have you ever refused a job that was offered to you?
2.6. If yes, why did you refuse? (select the main reason)
   a) Wages offered were too low
   b) Work was not interesting
   c) Location was not convenient
   d) Work would not match my level of qualifications
   e) There was no contract length offered or contract length was too short
   f) Other

2.7. What kind of training do you think would be most helpful in finding a job? Check all that apply
   a) Completion of university
   b) Apprenticeship with an employer
   c) Entrepreneurship training to start own business
   d) Computer and IT training
   e) Professional training
   f) Foreign languages
   g) Completion of vocational training
   h) Completion of secondary education

2.8. Do you feel the education/training you received is useful in getting a job?
   1- Very useful  6- Not useful

2.9. Do you know of any support that aims to encourage young people get employed/ to start their own business?
   a) Yes
   b) No

2.10. How would you evaluate this support?
   1- Very little support  6- Great support

2.11. Which of the following activities best corresponds to what you are doing?
   a) I am currently studying
   b) I am employed
   c) I am unemployed
   d) I am self-employed

3. Currently studying
3.1. What level of education are you pursuing currently?
   a) Secondary school- second chance program
   b) Secondary school
   c) Vocational education
   d) University
   e) Post-graduate studies
   f) Other

3.2. Do you/ did you work during your studies?
3.3. If yes where did you work?
3.4. Was it paid?
3.5. What do you plan to do after completing your current studies?
   a) Look for a job
   b) Stay at home
   c) Go for further education
   d) Start my own business
   e) I do not know
   f) Get practical experience through internships
   g) Other

3.6. Does the school/university help you in choosing your career or finding employment? If yes, how?
3.7. Have you already started looking for a job? If yes, where?
a) Through training/education institution  
b) Job fairs  
c) Public employment office  
d) Job ads on the internet or newspapers  
e) Asking different firms  
f) Seeking assistance of friends, relatives, colleagues, unions etc.

4. **Unemployed**

4.1. Which of the following activities best corresponds to what you are doing?
   a) Work as unpaid family member (work for family gain)  
   b) Available and actively looking for work  
   c) Engaged in training  
   d) Engaged in home duties (including child care)  
   e) Do not work or seek work for other reasons (disability, etc.)

4.2. What has been the main obstacle in finding a good job? (Check all that apply)
   a) I didn't learn the right things in my education  
   b) Not enough jobs available  
   c) Considered too young/old  
   d) Being male/female  
   e) Discriminatory prejudices (for example, disability, religion, race, appearance, etc.)  
   f) Low wages in available jobs  
   g) Poor working conditions in available jobs  
   h) Other

4.3. How are you looking for a job? (Check all that apply)
   a) Through education/training institution  
   b) Attending job fairs  
   c) Registration at a public employment office  
   d) Sending direct application to employers  
   e) Checking opportunities with different firms  
   f) Seeking assistance of friends, relatives, colleagues, unions, etc.  
   g) Looking for land, building, machinery, equipment to establish own enterprise  
   h) Other

4.4. How long have you been available for work and actively looking for a job?
   a) 1-2 months  
   b) 3-6 months  
   c) 6 months-1 year  
   d) More than 1 year

4.5. If opportunity to work had existed (over the last 7 days) would you have been able to start working?
   a) Yes  
   b) No  
   c) Maybe

4.6. Would you like to establish your own business?
   a) Yes  
   b) No  
   c) Maybe

4.7. What sort of job are you looking for (occupation)? (Check all that apply)
   a) Manual job (e.g. construction, agriculture, etc.)  
   b) Administrative job (e.g. officer, receptionist, etc.)  
   c) Technical jobs (e.g. engineer, operator, etc.)
d) Professional jobs (e.g. manager, teacher, etc.)
e) Other

4.8. Would you consider moving to find work?
   a) No
   b) Moving to capital city
   c) Moving to a town (other than the capital)
   d) Moving to another country
   e) No preference

4.9. Since you started looking for work, how many jobs have you applied for?
   a) None
   b) Less than 5
   c) Between 5 and 10
   d) Between 10 and 20
   e) More than 20
   f) Other

4.10. Since you started looking for work, how many interviews have you had?
   a) None
   b) Between 1 and 5
   c) Between 5 and 10
   d) More than 10
   e) Other

5. **Employed**

5.1. Which of the following activities best corresponds to what you are doing?
   a) Work for wage for a short time period
   b) Work for a wage for a long term contract
   c) Casual employment (e.g. seasonal)
   d) Paid apprenticeship
   e) Other

5.2. Which of the following jobs describes best what you do?
   a) Manual job (e.g. construction, agriculture, etc.)
   b) Administrative job (e.g. officer, receptionist, etc.)
   c) Technical jobs (e.g. engineer, operator, etc.)
   d) Professional jobs (e.g. manager, teacher, etc.)
   e) Other

5.3. How did you find your job?
   a) Through education/training institution
   b) Attending job fairs
   c) Registration at a public employment office
   d) Sending direct application to employers
   e) Checking opportunities with different firms
   f) Seeking assistance of friends, relatives, colleagues, unions, etc.
   g) Looking for land, building, machinery, equipment to establish own enterprise
   h) Other
5.4. What do you think made you a suitable candidate for getting the job (e.g. training, skills needed)?

5.5. For how many jobs you have applied before finding this one?
   a) Around 5
   b) Between 5 and 10
   c) Between 10 and 20
   d) More than 20
   e) Other

5.6. Did you move for your job?
   a) No
   b) I moved to the capital city
   c) I moved to a town
   d) I moved to a rural area
   e) I moved to another country
   f) Other

5.7. Do you feel supported to grow in your career in your current job?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) Maybe

6. **Self-employed**

6.1. Which of the following activities best corresponds to what you are doing?
   a) Freelancer
   b) Independent business owner
   c) Non-registered business
   d) Occasional job (e.g. recycling)
   e) Work in family business
   f) Member of producers’ cooperative
   g) Other

6.2. In which sector do you operate?
   a) Services (e.g. food industry)
   b) Economic sector (e.g. production of goods)
   c) Social sector (e.g. NGO)
   d) Cultural sector
   e) Other

6.3. If you have a business, what is its size?
   a) Less than 5 employees
   b) Between 6 and 15 employees
   c) Between 16 and 25 employees
   d) More than 25 employees
   e) Other

6.4. How easy is obtaining a credit/loan in your country?
   1- Very difficult       6- Very easy

6.5. How burdensome is starting a business in your country?
   1- Very difficult       6- Very easy

6.6. What are the main problems in starting a business?
a) Lack of finance
b) Lack of job-specific skills
c) Lack of customers
d) Lack of business skills
e) Gov. licensing and regulations
f) Lack of raw material
g) Lack of adequate labour
h) Unable to work (disability, age)
i) Other

6.7. Did you move for your business/self-employment?
   a) No
   b) I moved to the capital city
   c) I moved to a town
   d) I moved to a rural area
   e) I moved to another country
   f) Other

6.8. Do you feel supported to grow in your career in your current job status?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) Maybe
INFORMATION AND CONTACT

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ERGO Network

The European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network (ERGO) is a network of Roma and pro-Roma NGOs across Europe and advocates for better policies for Roma in Europe, combats antigypsyism and empowers Roma activists.

www.ergonetwork.org

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