



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

Recommendations

European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network



Summary

Unemployment rates in Europe show big discrepancies, with Roma being much more likely to be unemployed than non-Roma. According to a Fundamental Rights Agency survey from 2016, the paid work rate for Roma aged 20-64 years was 43 %, well below the EU average of 70 %. The highest differences between Roma and majority populations are in their NEET (not in employment, education or training) rates, with Roma being almost five times more likely to be NEET (63 % of Roma aged 16-24, compared with a 12 % EU average for the same age group).¹ For Roma women the situation is even more striking. The employment rate of Roma women was 16 % as compared to 34 % for Roma men. The employment rate for men of majority populations stood at 77.4 %, and for women 65.5 % towards the end of 2016. In addition, there is a significant gender gap for young people not in employment, education or training: 72% of young Roma women are in the NEET category as compared to 55% of young Roma men.

As our and other comparable data show, the higher the level of education, the lower the unemployment rate - and the level of education of the Roma population is far lower than that of non-Roma people. Roma are almost seven times more likely to leave school with lower secondary education or less. The employment situation is better for highly educated Roma, but only 1% of Roma graduate from college or university.² Young people coming from marginalised communities face more obstacles to find employment; encountering antigypsyism, however, is common to all educational levels as it manifests itself, for example, in the form of racial profiling by potential employers.

The following recommendations are one of the outcomes of a comprehensive fact finding exercise of ERGO members from Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, the Czech Republic and Slovakia.³ The aim of the research was to find out what works for young Roma across different national, regional and educational contexts when it comes to finding employment. In addition, we assessed to what extent Roma youth and others interviewed refer to existing European and national youth employment policy frameworks and whether they are being implemented.

The research shows that the more educated young Roma are and the better their geographical conditions, the higher their chances of being employed. College graduates need jobs that match their level of qualification, whereas less-educated Roma need programmes that can support them to either stay in their current school or to continue their education. Roma young people think that there are no real employment opportunities. Besides this, they consider the lack of proper education and training and the lack of work experience as two of the main factors obstructing their employment. Other structural factors are the general labour market situation in their area, including low wages, corruption and nepotism. Furthermore, highly educated young Roma are not familiar with employment offices' support tools and funds supporting youth employment. The findings are surprising, considering the amount of national and EU-level strategies, initiatives and plans aiming to enhance youth employment.

¹ Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II) Roma – Selected findings
<http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/eumidis-ii-roma-selected-findings/fra-opinions>

² KSH, Eurostat 2017

³ The recommendations are based on three publications that can be downloaded from the ERGO website at
<http://ergonetwork.org/our-work/monitoring/youth-employment/> (last access December 18, 2018).

Recommendations

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 research. Young Roma people ask their **governments** to provide more support for young Roma and other young people to enter the labour market by:

- 1. Invest in quality education that fits the labour market needs:** Governments must invest into education that provides young Roma with professional development and leads to qualifications that are in line with the specific national labour market needs. Schools should furthermore provide mandatory and quality professional orientation.
- 2. Prevent and address early school dropout:** Governments need to address early school drop-out of Roma youth, especially of girls, at different levels so Roma young people increase their chances of getting decent jobs.
- 3. Prevent and address segregation in education:** Governments should invest into fighting structural antigypsyism such as segregation in education and provide an environment free of antigypsyism in schools.
- 4. Focus on the most marginalised:** It is of crucial importance to ensure sustainable inclusion of young Roma people into the labour market, especially of those who are not employed or are not in education or training. The most marginalised are not educated and they should be assisted with getting qualifications – through motivation, scholarships, mentorship and secured opportunities for at least temporary employment where qualification is not needed.
- 5. Train employment officers and employers to fight antigypsyism:** There is a need to train the employment offices as well as potential employees on historical and present antigypsyism especially in order to counter the phenomenon during the recruitment process.
- 6. Provide fair pay:** Governments should invest in different programmes enabling Roma youth employment that provide sufficient compensation for their labour, so they are not forced to migrate at an early stage of their working lives and they can have decent and independent lives. Supporting the availability of paid internships or other paid programmes would also enable young Roma to gain necessary work experience.
- 7. Embrace social responsibility:** Governments should promote new models to facilitate Roma employment in the mainstream business sector, including focusing on Roma with high school and university degrees to create a space for overcoming the issue of highly educated Roma working in places that do not use either their capacities or their qualifications, while at the same time encouraging employers to embrace corporate social responsibility.
- 8. Provide high-level jobs in the public sector:** Governments should invest in targeted support measures enabling Roma youth employment that would provide long-term employment in the public sector. It should be taken into account here that even highly educated Roma encounter obstacles in accessing mainstream (i.e., not Roma-related) jobs due to lack of work experience and antigypsyism. They are also often overqualified for the work they are doing.

9. **Support entrepreneurship:** Specific concrete mechanisms are needed to increase 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.
10. **Enable access to mainstream youth programmes:** Member States in cooperation with relevant stakeholders need to ensure that the national youth employment policies, such as Youth Guarantee measures are delivered in reality for all young citizens of their countries. An important measure of active labour market policies for promotion of youth employment is the implementation of projects from the resources of the European Social Funds, focusing on the promotion of job creation in the private and public sectors for the unemployed up to 29 years of age.
11. **Improve cooperation between young Roma and labour offices:** Governments should encourage a closer communication between labor offices and young Roma people to increase the number of Roma youth engaged within the programs of the employment offices. The role of labour offices should be revisited, in the sense that they should encourage and stimulate young people to use their services. Also cooperation with NGOs who are able to reach out to young Roma should be increased.
12. **Take a holistic approach:** Programs should be created to directly fight youth unemployment with an embraced holistic and multi-sectoral approach. For example, it would be important to provide more substantial support for accommodation and commuting costs, as most employers cannot afford or do not want to reimburse their employees for the cost of their commute. Further, it is believed that there is a lack of social services incentives stimulating unemployed persons to go take initiative.

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:

1. **Reform the European Youth Guarantee** and the Youth Employment Initiative by giving particular attention to the most marginalised. This can include in particular:
 - Better targeting of training programmes specifically for marginalised groups.
 - Specific trainings for Public Employment Services (PES) on how to reach out to and deal with marginalised groups.
 - A more flexible and accessible registration process of PES 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 marginalised groups than PES. 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.
2. Include specific **targets for Roma employment in the Social Scoreboard** in order to measure progress of EU Member States in delivering on their commitments.
3. **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 do not 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.

4. **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.

ERGO Network

The European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network 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.



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