

THE SITUATION OF ROMA IN EUROPE

ERGO NETWORK SNAPSHOT ON...

Social dialogue and involvement of workers



82% of Roma are unaware of organisations offering support to victims of discrimination.

ERGO Network has reached out to the main trade union umbrella organisations at Brussels level – the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the European Public Service Union (EPSU), the European Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CESI), and UNI Europa – in an attempt to understand the degree of representation of Roma workers in trade union structures. It appears that such information is unknown.

Our national members were equally unable to locate this information. However, the consensus was that there seemed to be low coverage of trade union membership among

Roma workers, which in turn leads to less visibility of the specific issues Roma workers have, such as the ethnic pay gap or discrimination in the workplace.

This situation is even more serious when we take into account that evidence from all countries shows that the Roma are overrepresented in exploitative forms of employment (including the informal economy), because of a lack of knowledge of their rights.

The umbrella term “Roma” encompasses diverse groups, including Roma, Sinti, Kale, Romanichels, Boyash/Rudari, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom, Rom and Abdal, as well as Traveller populations (gens du voyage, Gypsies, Camminanti, etc.), as defined by the [European Commission](#).

The Roma overwhelmingly work in jobs that are low paid, on zero-hours contracts, often in factory-based environments or other that require hard physical work.

The consequences for large numbers of the Roma community are inconsistent working hours and, therefore, unpredictable income. Insecure contracts lead to vulnerability and to abuse, as Roma in these working environments are often asked to work extra unpaid hours and are too scared to make complaints, even in cases of sexual harassment or unfair / unlawful dismissal.

The Roma might be a desirable workforce at busy times, but in lulls they are also the first to be dropped off. The Roma working in the “grey” economy continue to be vulnerable – even invisible – workers, finding it very difficult to assert their employment rights.

ERGO Network Recommendations

- Improve the collection of disaggregated data in trade union membership, in order to have a clearer picture of how the different concerns of vulnerable workers, including but not limited to Roma workers, are taken up in collective bargaining.
- Invest in specific provisions that cover the most vulnerable workers, such as seasonal and migrant workers and those in the informal economy, not covered by standard contracts.



- Encourage and support, including financially, anti-bias and anti-discrimination trainings for social partners, to build better awareness of the specific issues faced by minority workers and other vulnerable groups on the labour market, so that these issues can become a part of social dialogue.
- Support information campaigns for workers about their employment rights, including in the Romani language, and put in place specific outreach measures for Roma workers.
- Ensure that Labour Inspectorates and the European Labour Authority protect and promote a work environment where recourse and appeal are available to all without prejudice or discrimination.

Sources

- European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey – Roma, 2017



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This snapshot is an excerpt from ERGO Network's position paper [How to ensure that the European Pillar of Social Rights delivers on Roma equality, inclusion, and participation?](#), October 2020