

SNAPSHOT: SITUATION OF ROMA IN EUROPE

SOCIAL PROTECTION, UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS & MINIMUM INCOME

**OVER
80%**

of Roma are **at risk of poverty**, a number unchanged from 2016.

In **Spain** (98%), **Italy** (98%), and **Portugal** (96%), this means almost the entire Roma population.

**OVER
48%**

of Roma **live in material deprivation**.

83%

of Roma **children** are at risk of **poverty**, while

54%

of them live in **material deprivation**.



ERGO
NETWORK

Roma communities across Europe continue to face both absolute and relative poverty, as well as material deprivation levels that are several times higher than those experienced by the general population. Poverty among Roma is rooted in a lack of access to sufficient, adequate income, coupled with simultaneous disadvantages in education, housing, health, and access to services, compounded with discrimination, highlighting the depth and persistence of social exclusion.

In our predominantly cash-based economies, and on the backdrop of increased privatisation of public services, access to income is fundamental. Yet, fewer than 50% of Roma are in formal, paid employment, which also significantly limits their access to contributory benefits such as unemployment allowances or pensions.

Social security and social assistance, including minimum income schemes, are often conditional on compliance with stringent requirements, which the Roma, already trapped in cycles of poverty and precarious living, struggle to meet. This creates a vicious cycle, where poverty itself becomes a barrier to alleviating poverty.

Overcomplex administrative procedures and a lack of accessible information about entitlements further compound this exclusion. The lack of documents, including ID, and the prerequisite of a fixed address in itself often disqualifies many Roma, particularly those with insecure housing or irregular migration histories, from essential state supports.

Moreover, across many EU Member States, minimum income levels are insufficient to ensure a life of dignity. Low benefit adequacy undermines their ability to meet basic needs or invest in their future. Compounding this is the widespread non-take-up of benefits in Roma communities. This is driven by structural antigypsyism, fear of stigmatisation, both for being Roma and for being on welfare, and mistrust of public institutions.

Access to adequate and inclusive income support is essential not only for individual well-being, but also as a foundational pillar of the European Social Model. It ensures people can participate fully in society, seize opportunities, and reach their potential.

The EU Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation rightly identifies poverty reduction as a cross-cutting objective, but achieving this requires targeted investment in inclusive, adequate, and accessible social protection systems that leave no one behind.

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.), in accordance with terminology used by the [European Commission](#).



ERGO
N E T W O R K

Recommendations:

- **Adopt an EU Framework Directive on Adequate Minimum Income** under Article 153(1)(h) TFEU, to establish common standards for adequacy, aligned with 60% of national median income (the poverty line), and linked to inflation, purchasing power, and reference budgets to ensure real, dignified living standards.
- **Ensure levels of income support that respond to real needs** and set regular revision of benefit amounts and reference indices to reflect actual costs of living, enabling income support schemes to adequately protect people from poverty and social exclusion.
- **Shift from punitive to supportive welfare systems**, by replacing conditional approaches with rights-based, person-centred activation strategies that recognize the complexity of social exclusion. Conditionality and sanctions should be abolished, as they exacerbate hardship rather than support inclusion.
- **Simplify and streamline the delivery of benefits**, by making application procedures accessible and striving to automate entitlements wherever possible to overcome obstacles like illiteracy, lack of identification, fixed address, or digital exclusion. Well-resourced public initiatives in communities should include legal aid, interpretation, and personalised assistance, while information about rights and entitlements should be adequately disseminated in ways that all potential claimants can understand.
- **Combat discrimination and antigypsyism in welfare** and implement mandatory anti-discrimination training for public institutions handling social protection and social security, as well as social services and social inclusion more broadly. Penalise discriminatory practices and challenge public narratives that stigmatise benefit recipients, especially Roma, who face compounded discrimination.
- **Strengthen cross-policy efforts to combat Roma poverty**, by embedding strong links between the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy and the horizontal priority of the EU Roma Strategic Framework on combatting poverty, maintain and strengthen the Roma-related enabling conditionality in EU funds, collect AROPE data disaggregated by ethnicity through Eurostat, and pilot targeted social audits that identify specific risks arising from intersectional vulnerabilities in Roma communities.

