



EUROPEAN COMMISSION RELEASES AUTUMN PACKAGE 2026

WHAT'S IN IT FOR EUROPE'S ROMA¹?

On 25 November 2025, the European Commission published the ***Autumn Package***, thus kick-starting the European Semester 2026. The Annual Sustainable Growth Survey, which had already disappeared last year, did not make a comeback this year either, marking a definite departure from the previous structure of this Package. Instead, much like last year, there is a brief **accompanying Communication** (4 pages and a half, as opposed to 2 pages and a half in 2025), alongside the usual documents dedicated to macroeconomic and budgetary analysis, the draft **Joint Employment Report**, and, this year, also a **Communication on Human Capital**. The views of social partners on key economic and social challenges and on the European Semester are equally included. ERGO Network reviewed the Autumn Package, to see to which extent it explicitly mentions Roma rights and inclusion, ethnic minorities, discrimination, and racism (including antigypsyism).

¹ 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 Network warmly welcomes the **explicit mention of the Roma in this year's accompanying Communication** (page 4), in the context of **supporting their access to employment**, alongside other categories of workers whose employment rates lag behind, including also young people and persons with disabilities. This mirrors wording previously used in Annual Sustainable Growth Surveys through the years.

It is nonetheless regrettable that, just like in previous Autumn Packages, **the Roma are only considered from the perspective of their contribution to the labour market**, while other aspects of their wellbeing and social inclusion are missing. There is **no comprehensive approach across the four pillars of the EU Roma Strategy**, with references to important areas such as health, housing, education, poverty reduction, or equality. In fact, the Communication includes **no additional references to ethnic minorities, racism, or discrimination**.

The opening line of the Communication immediately indicates that **competitiveness is the overarching goal** of the current mandate of the European Commission and, implicitly, the guiding dimension for the European Semester. The text goes on to **reaffirm the Competitiveness Compact**, released as part of last year's Autumn Package, as the bedrock for this pursuit, including its seven priorities, building on the Draghi report. In order to support these efforts, the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) of the European Union was also adjusted, with **the introduction of the National and Regional Partnership plans (NRPPs)**, which would also address challenges identified in the context of the European Semester, particularly in Country-Specific Recommendations.

Throughout the document, there are some positive references to **protecting the European Social Model**, promoting upward social convergence, boosting **affordable and sustainable housing**, strengthening **education and training** policies, improving **job quality and working conditions**, stepping up efforts to **fight poverty**. However, what is **missing is a rights-based approach**, where these wellbeing goals were pursued in order to ensure better lives for people in Europe. Instead, most are formulated, explicitly or implicitly, as **bottlenecks to competitiveness**.

While it is true that poverty and inequality are extremely costly and not conducive to achieving economic prosperity or innovation excellence, combatting deprivation and exclusion **should primarily be a matter of fundamental rights**. The European Pillar of Social Rights, the proclaimed “compass of Europe’s recovery” (before competitiveness became the compass), is only mentioned twice in the text, both times as a functional reference, rather than as a commitment to its principles and, above all, its ethos.

The Communication still **looks at GDP as a measure of success**, whereas the metric does not capture whether the benefits of growth are actually redistributed and translated into decent living standards, reduced inequality, or access to rights. The analysis is incomplete without **complementary indicators on inequality, redistribution, and poverty**, as decades of experience show that trickle-down economics does not deliver social progress. Without deliberate redistribution and social investment, **growth alone fails to reduce inequality** or improve outcomes for the most disadvantaged.

The document also outlines the **workings of the European Semester 2026** and what are the key steps and milestones to be expected. With the National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRRPs) coming to an end in August 2026, this cycle will act as a bridge between this process and the new MFF. The **Spring Package** (Country Reports and Country-Specific Recommendations) will build on the 2025 CSRs and **remain focused on improving competitiveness**.

Regarding the draft **Joint Employment Report (JER)**, we are very pleased to see Europe’s **Roma mentioned multiple times** in the document, concerning issues such as **poverty**, with a very comprehensive and well-written paragraph on Roma poverty, as well as other references, and **education**, particularly regarding increased rates of early school leaving and limited access to early childhood education and care among Roma. We further appreciate the explicit **links with the EU Roma Strategic Framework** and the Council Recommendation on Roma Equality, Inclusion, and Participation, and the Council Conclusions on desegregated housing. There is **no connection made, however, with the Anti-Racism Action Plan / Strategy**.

While we very much welcome these references, particularly concerning Roma poverty, we note once again the **lack of a holistic approach**, which would also look at key dimensions such as **housing and health**. But most strikingly, there is **nothing in the Joint Employment Report about Roma participation in the labour market**, which is puzzling, given that its detailed analysis is supposed to underpin the accompanying Communication. And yet, the Communication only mentions the Roma once, regarding access to employment, while this concern is absent from the Joint Employment Report, which instead focuses on Roma poverty. This points to a **clear disconnect between the policy agenda and the realities** on the ground.

Regarding the **country fiche**s that make up the Annex to the draft Joint Employment Report, the **Roma are only mentioned in the ones for Bulgaria and the Czech Republic**, which is a clear step down from last year's Joint Employment Report, when there were references to Roma in the country fiche for Bulgaria, Hungary, Ireland, Romania, and Spain. There are no references in the document to ethnic minorities or racism, which is regrettable. More encouragingly, **discrimination is referred to several times** (11), however the bulk of the references (8) are employment-related, regarding older workers, migrants, and women. We would have appreciated a more **comprehensive approach to intersectional discrimination** on all grounds, including ethnicity, as well as an acknowledgement of pervasive antigypsyism.

The **Communication on Human Capital correctly identifies the need for improving professional competences** and skills in a number of areas, including the green and digital transition, however, it **fails to address the specific needs of disadvantaged learners**. The text rightly points out that certain groups are left behind by upskilling and training opportunities, **particularly those from a disadvantaged social background, including the Roma**, who are named explicitly. This is a welcome reference, but the measures to correct these imbalances are lacking. **People experiencing poverty, hunger, homelessness, and exclusion** are not able to access training opportunities, yet nothing is said about investing in creating these necessary pre-requisites for learning. Moreover, there are **no provisions to tackle discrimination** in the provision of training and upskilling, despite it constituting a significant obstacle to learning.

Last but not least, support for civil dialogue and for the broad and **meaningful participation of civil society is fairly weak** throughout the three documents of the Package analysed above. In the accompanying Communication, there is a broad reference to the European Commission improving "**structured dialogue with** governments, regional and local authorities, social partners, and **civil society organisations**" (page 5, our bold). We are pleased to see civil society explicitly mentioned, however in the past the call was equally addressed to Member States. The draft Joint Employment Report includes stronger language, stating twice that "The involvement and consultation of both social partners and **civil society organisations are key for policy-making** and for driving sustainable and inclusive change." (our bold) While very positive, these two references are self-standing and not mainstreamed through the rest of the text. There are no references to civil society at all in the Communication on Human Capital.

ERGO Network will continue to advocate for a stronger focus on Roma rights and inclusion in the framework for these processes, and for **stronger synergies between the European Semester and the EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion, and Participation**, the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan, and other relevant policies.

For more information on ERGO Network's work on the European Semester, please contact

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