

SNAPSHOT: SITUATION OF ROMA IN EUROPE

CHILDCARE AND SUPPORT TO CHILDREN

83%

of Roma children under the age of 18 **live under the risk of poverty.**

44%

or less than half of young Roma children **are enrolled in early childhood education and care (ECEC) programmes.**

39%

of non-Roma would **feel comfortable if their children had Roma classmates** (with 26% moderately comfortable and 27% uncomfortable).

54%

of Roma children live in households that are **unable to afford four of the nine items** that are outlined in the "material deprivation index."

From 2016 to 2021, the **segregation** of Roma children in education has **increased by**

8%

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The early years of a child's life are critical for their development, yet Roma children have historically been left behind. Roma children disproportionately experience poverty and material deprivation, which severely impacts their physical, mental, and emotional development. Poverty limits their access to education, healthcare, and essential services, increasing the risk of lifelong exclusion and perpetuating intergenerational transmission of disadvantage.

There are no poor children in rich families. Many Roma parents see themselves forced to work seasonally or informally, often with limited labour protections and access to benefits. As a result, Roma children are at times forcibly removed from their families, a practice which violates rights, breaks vital family bonds, leads to childhood trauma, and perpetuates cycles of exclusion and mistrust. Support, not separation, should be the answer.

Roma children face persistent barriers in accessing education and early childhood care. Although public education is tuition-free, associated costs are frequently prohibitive for poor Roma families. Segregated and isolated Roma neighborhoods lack childcare and healthcare facilities, and institutional antigypsyism leads to exclusion and denial of services.

Many Roma families live in overcrowded, poorly maintained homes, often without access to basic utilities or energy efficiency, which undermines children's health and wellbeing. Harmful practices such as segregation, forced evictions, and spatial isolation further traumatize Roma children and disrupt their development. Health inequalities are stark, with Roma children being disproportionately represented among those with disabilities and in institutional care.

Widespread antigypsyism remains a pervasive obstacle in Roma children's lives, as they experience segregation, bullying, exclusion, and violence in schools, healthcare, and societal interactions, due to both ethnic and socioeconomic discrimination.

Collecting disaggregated data, including specific Roma indicators, is critical for monitoring progress and ensuring no child is overlooked. Equally, effective policies for Roma children must be grounded in the direct involvement of Roma communities, children, and parents, through tailored outreach, resources, and partnership with Roma civil society organisations.



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](#).

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Recommendations:

- **Ensure that the Child Guarantee delivers to the fullest on the wellbeing of Roma children**, by explicitly and effectively addressing the multiple disadvantages they face, by dismantling long-standing structural barriers and ensuring equal opportunities.
- **Ensure that no Roma child grows up in poverty**, by investing in integrated, child- and family-centered approaches that promote equity and social justice, and supporting families through income security, decent housing, comprehensive healthcare, and access to essential public services, building on an Active Inclusion approach.
- **End and prevent the unjust separation of Roma children from their families**, by addressing the root causes such as poverty, discrimination, and lack of support services. Instead, uphold the rights of the child by striving to keep families together.
- **Invest in quality, affordable, and community-rooted early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, especially in and near Roma communities.** These services should be co-designed with Roma civil society, accessible regardless of legal or administrative barriers, and include support for innovative local social economy initiatives.
- **Guarantee universal access to free, healthy, and nutritious meals for all children in need**, including through school feeding programmes, community soup kitchens, and mobile hot meal services, especially during school holidays, to combat child hunger and food insecurity in Roma communities.
- **Build the capacity of ECEC personnel and other educational and pertinent staff** to deliver inclusive, culturally sensitive education, through training on intercultural competence, diversity games, and curricula that reflect Roma language, culture, and history. Prioritise the recruitment and retention of Roma professionals and mediators in education and care roles.
- **Take active steps to eliminate discrimination and institutional antigypsyism in both public and private ECEC and other educational and child-oriented settings** by mandating anti-bias and anti-discrimination training for all staff, ensuring diverse and Roma-inclusive workforces, and putting safeguards in place to prevent and respond to exclusionary practices.
- **Support disaggregated data collection to monitor Roma children's access, outcomes, and rights**, as pockets of deep discrimination and exclusion are often overlooked by general statistics. Support close partnerships with community actors and social works with field experience and existing databases for this purpose.
- **Ensure robust funding, including earmarking of EU funds, as well through national public social investment**, to support the fight against child poverty in general, and Roma child poverty in particular.
- **Foster meaningful partnerships between early childhood services and Roma parents**, including through trust-building outreach, parental support programmes, and awareness-raising on the benefits of early education, to empower families and strengthen their engagement in their children's development.

