



# EUROPEAN ROMA GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS (ERGO) NETWORK

## *Implementing the EU Roma Strategic Framework Roma access to decent and sustainable employment*

25 November 2024  
9:30 – 16:30

### Conference Report

Implementing the EU Roma Strategic Framework

Roma access to decent and sustainable employment

25 November  
#ERGOConference2024



This conference was kindly supported by the European Union Programme for Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) and by the German Federal Foreign Office.



Federal Foreign Office

# Conference Programme

## 10h Welcome Refreshments

### 10h30 Opening Remarks

- *Annabel Carballo Mesa*, ERGO Network Board
- *Erika Koller*, European Economic and Social Committee
- *Hon. Mélissa Camara MEP*, France, Greens/EFA (video message)

## 11h PANEL ONE: Roma access to decent and sustainable employment

**Moderator:** *Robbie Stakelum*, Eurofound

- *Bianca Galusca*, Federation of Roma Associations in Catalonia (FAGiC) / ERGO Network
- *Oliver Mako*, WASCO Roma social enterprise from Slovakia
- *Paola Panzeri*, European Public Service Union (EPSU)
- *Atanas Stoyanov*, European Commission, DG Justice and Consumers
- Q&A and interactive exchange with the audience

## 12h30 Networking lunch

## 14h00 PANEL TWO: The implementation of the EU Roma Strategic Framework

**Moderator:** *Julie Pascoët*, European Network Against Racism (ENAR)

- *Isabela Mihalache*, ERGO Network
- *Isak Skenderi*, Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (VORAE), Kosovo / ERGO Network
- *Mustafa Jakupov*, Reporting and Information Centre on Antigypsyism (MIA), Germany
- *Danijel Čubelić*, European Coalition of Cities Against Racism (ECCAR)
- Q&A and interactive exchange with the audience

## 16h00 Closing Session

- *Irena Moozová*, European Commission, DG Justice and Consumers
- *Jamen Gabriela Hrabaňová*, ERGO Network Director

## 16h30 End of the event

**On 25 November, ERGO Network held its annual Policy Conference, dedicated to Roma access to decent and sustainable employment and to taking stock of the implementation of the European and National Roma Strategic Frameworks, with a focus on combatting antigypsyism.**



The Roma are more likely to experience discrimination in recruitment and in the workplace, to be paid less, to be offered precarious contracts, to be overlooked for promotions or learning opportunities, or to be given dangerous or unsuitable tasks. Job creation efforts are not enough to provide the Roma with quality and secure jobs, and the great potential of social entrepreneurship is insufficiently supported. The event launched ERGO Network’s research report on “[Roma access to decent and sustainable employment](#)”, based on six national case studies carried out in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain, with additional benchmarking evidence from Ireland. The second part of the event assessed the state of play of the National Roma Strategic Frameworks in EU and enlargement countries and their alignment with the EU Roma Strategic Framework and linked Council Recommendation, with a particular focus on the areas of combatting antigypsyism, and it launched ERGO Network’s survey report on “[Fighting antigypsyism through National Roma Strategic Frameworks](#)”.

The event was well attended with over 75 participants on site and online, and it brought together ERGO Network national members from the grassroots level, as well as other national practitioners, European civil society organisations, policymakers from the European institutions and national governments, and other relevant stakeholders.

You can read a summary of the proceedings below, as well as watch the [full recording](#), check out the [photo album](#), and read our website [news article](#) about the conference.

## OPENING REMARKS

### Annabel Carballo Mesa

ERGO Network Board

Ms Carballo welcomed participants and spoke about the situation of Roma working in Europe, stressing ERGO Network's commitment to combatting antigypsyism and Roma poverty and unemployment, while strengthening (pro-)Roma civil society participation in decision-making at all levels. She outlined the structure of the event and encouraged participants and guests to join the debate for a better Europe for Roma. Ms Carballo also thanked speakers, moderators, and guests, and wished all attendants a fruitful morning of discussion.

👉 [Access the full intervention here.](#)



### Erika Koller

European Economic and Social Committee

Ms Koller welcomed participants in the house of civil society and of trade unions and stated that employment issues were particularly close to her heart. She stressed that it was unacceptable that the Roma were still experiencing discrimination on the labour market, particularly in light of existing shortages. Ms Koller also highlighted the low participation in employment of Roma women and Roma young people and called for strong measures to combat antigypsyism in employment and in society. She ended her intervention by reminding that the fight against discrimination and particularly antigypsyism needed to be urgently mainstreamed also in Europe's socio-economic policies.

👉 [Access the full intervention here.](#)

**Hon. Mélissa Camara MEP**  
 European Parliament, Greens/EFA, France (video message)



Ms Camara highlighted that combatting hate and discrimination was a priority of her mandate, and that she would work to ensure that marginalised communities, including Roma, were heard and respected. She lamented how Roma continued to face systemic exclusion, especially on the labour market, despite equal access to decent work being a right, and essential for breaking the cycle of poverty. Ms Camara pointed out that all efforts to improve

Roma inclusion must confront the deep roots of racism and antigypsyism, which are structural inequalities and violence. She stressed that this dimension needed to be placed at the core of the EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation. Ms Camara concluded her address by reminding that, as Co-Chair of the Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup (ARDI) in the European Parliament, she stood committed to supporting these goals, but that this must be a collective effort.

👉 *Watch the full video intervention [here](#).*



## PANEL ONE

### Roma access to decent and sustainable employment



#### **Bianca Galusca**

#### **Federation of Roma Associations in Catalonia (FAGiC) / ERGO Network**

Ms Galusca presented the ERGO Network 2024 research report on Roma access to decent and sustainable employment, based on case studies carried out in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain, with additional benchmarking evidence from Ireland.

The key messages of the report:

1. *A majority of Roma are not in paid work, at least not in the formal economy, nor are they adequately supported to enter the labour market.*
2. *The Roma who work are in poor-quality jobs with low pay, insecure contracts, unsafe working conditions, no access to training, and almost no trade union coverage.*
3. *Antigypsyism is pervasive in recruitment as well as in the workplace.*
4. *Pushed to the margins of the labour market, the Roma make ends meet through the informal economy, pursuing traditional crafts, or seeking work abroad.*
5. *Job creation efforts that would benefit the Roma are scarce – and while the social economy holds great potential for Roma employment, it is currently underutilised.*
6. *Participation of Roma communities and their civil society organisations is paramount in co-creating sustainable ways forward.*

👉 **Access the full PowerPoint presentation [here](#), and the research report [here](#).**

## Oliver Mako

### WASCO Roma social enterprise from Slovakia

Mr Mako explained that he is the Deputy Manager of WASCO, a Roma-led *work integration social enterprise (WISE)* from Valaská, Slovakia, which employs Roma and other groups having a hard time on the open labour market. He described how what first started as a laundry business slowly turned into a fully-fledged community centre with diverse activities, where the staff feel supported and empowered. Alongside the services provided and the workplaces that it creates Mr Mako elaborated, WASCO also provides social services, opened an educational centre, supported the transformation of public spaces for the creation of community facilities, and organised the diversity festival Horehronie Spolu. A short video was also shown to participants.

👉 [Access the full PowerPoint here](#) and [watch a short video about WASCO here](#).



## Paola Panzeri

### European Public Service Union (EPSU)

Ms Panzeri reminded that her intervention was taking place on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and that, while the fight was fought every day, she wished to explicitly mark the Day. She continued by highlighting a number of issues around workplace discrimination and the policies to combat it, starting from recruitment. She suggested measures such as neutral application processes, strong anti-discrimination regulation in the workplace, as well as diversity and anti-bias training for human resources as well as for the staff and management. Ms Panzeri also referred to the policy context, stressing that austerity and cuts were endangering the delivery of universal, good quality public services, including Public Employment Services, Labour Inspectorates etc. She concluded by calling for a partnership approach, where we stick together in fighting for more rights for all in Europe.

👉 [Access the full intervention here](#).

## Atanas Stoyanov

### European Commission, DG Justice and Consumers

Mr Stoyanov reminded the objectives of the EU Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Participation and Inclusion, including the horizontal priority of reducing Roma poverty and social exclusion, and the thematic objective of improving access to employment. He then proceeded to share the results of the monitoring carried out by the Fundamental Rights Agency in what concerns Member States' progress regarding these objectives, particularly in what concerned the employment rates of Roma women and Roma youth. Mr Stoyanov further shared some good practices and areas of improvement regarding the employment measures adopted by Member States, according to the European Commission's assessment. He concluded by pointing to some concrete initiatives through which EU funds were supporting Roma access to employment.

👉 [Access the full PowerPoint here.](#)



## Q&A and interactive exchange with the audience

Moderated by Robbie Stakelum, Eurofound

Mr Stakelum invited the audience to join in a brief “talk to your neighbour” exercise, where participants discussed among themselves (and on sli.do) about the most significant barrier that the Roma faced when trying to access decent and sustainable employment. The answers included discrimination and antigypsyism, low skills, lack of community-based quality jobs, the digital divide, poor social contacts, poverty, and scarcity of role models.

Mr Stakelum summarised the session, pointing out that the report was very timely as we lag behind the social objectives of the Social Pillar Action Plan. He recalled that, while poverty was stagnating, severe material deprivation and financial distress were increasing. Mr Stakelum concluded by reminding that the new European Commission offered some opportunities for mainstreaming the connection between discrimination and antigypsyism and poverty, such as the upcoming Anti-Poverty Strategy, Affordable Housing initiative, Job Quality Roadmap, etc.



## PANEL TWO

### The implementation of the EU Roma Strategic Framework

**Isabela Mihalache**

ERGO Network

Ms Mihalache, the author, presented the methodology and main findings of the survey report “Fighting antigypsyism through National Roma Strategic Frameworks”. She indicated that the main areas covered were segregation in education, housing, and basic services; hate speech and hate crime; Roma participation; funding for Roma; and inclusion of antigypsyism in National Roma Strategic Frameworks. Ms Mihalache detailed the findings for each of the areas, concluding that there was a clear gap between policy ambition and implementation, while Roma participation and funding for Roma inclusion were not at desired levels.

👉 [Access the full PowerPoint presentation here](#), and the survey report [here](#).



**Isak Skenderi**

Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians (VORAE), Kosovo / ERGO Network

Mr Skenderi provided insights on the level of commitment and implementation of the National Roma Frameworks in the Western Balkans EU candidate countries. He began by reminding the audience that the Governments in these countries had voluntarily committed to develop and implement such frameworks, and the analysis of the Roma challenges in the documents was correct. However, Mr Skenderi detailed the many factors which currently hinder implementation, such as lack of political will on the ground, financial constraints, lack of a legally binding character of the Framework, insufficient tackling of antigypsyism, and a lack of know-how.

👉 [Access the full intervention here](#).

## Mustafa Jakupov

Reporting and Information Centre on Antigypsyism (MIA), Germany

Mr Jakupov introduced himself as the author of a research report on digital inclusion for Roma, upon commission from the Roma Civil Monitor project. While the report will only be made public early next year, he offered participants an advance glimpse of its main findings. Mr Jakupov stressed that online exclusion was just an extension and a mirror of the offline exclusion that the Roma have faced for centuries. In this context, he underlined, it is important not to look at digital inclusion as a mere technical issue, but as a question of justice and a matter of survival, as people are cut off from essential services, job opportunities, information, and vital social networks. Mr Jakupov ended his intervention with a plea for the internet to not become yet another place where the Roma feel invisible.”

☞ [Access the full intervention here](#) and [read more about the Roma Civil Monitor project here](#).

Next, onsite and online participants were asked to use sli.do to contribute their thoughts on:

**What do you think are the biggest challenges to ensuring everyone has equal access to digital technologies?**



## Danijel Čubelić

European Coalition of Cities Against Racism (ECCAR)

Mr Čubelić provided an overview of the important work carried out by the European Coalition of Cities Against Racism, of which he is the Vice-President, and which brings together 180 European municipalities. He explained that the organisation, headquartered in Germany, provided a series of supportive activities and tools for its members to support their anti-racism work, such as a joint Action Plan, a Toolkit for Equality, a series of thematic Working Groups, as well as a feature allowing cities to report online on their initiatives. Mr Čubelić concluded by highlighting how the work of the Coalition yielded standardised and comparable data which could be fed into policy-making and institutional cooperation, including as part of UNESCO’s International Coalition for Inclusive and Sustainable Cities.

☞ [Access the full PowerPoint presentation here](#).



**Julie Pascoët (moderator)**  
**European Network Against Racism (ENAR)**

Ms Pascoët summed up the interventions of debate in the panel by reminding the main topics covered, ranging from measures to combat antigypsyism in the National Roma Strategic Frameworks, to the situation in Western Balkan countries, zooming in on digital inclusion, and then on the specific city level. She recalled the main challenges mentioned, namely lack of political will, lack of legal obligations when it came to antigypsyism, and a broader lack of understanding about the impact of racism. Ms Pascoët put forward some solutions, such as participation, representation in places of power, as well as working in coalitions – pointing to the new Anti-Racism Action Plan as an opportunity to join forces to include antigypsyism.

**CLOSING SESSION**

**Irena Moozová**  
**European Commission, DG Justice and Consumers**

Ms Moozová welcomed the work of ERGO Network to shine a light on Roma access to employment as well as on the state of play regarding the fight against antigypsyism and conceded that the situation on the ground still left much to be desired. She underlined that the European Commission, and the Equality units, stood ready to continue the work, and particularly to monitor efforts by Member States and to hold them accountable. Ms Moozová ended by stressing the need for strong partnerships in this endeavour, particularly with grassroots actors who can provide much-needed insights and who can help mainstream this agenda more broadly.

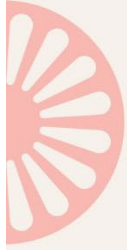
👉 [Access the full intervention here.](#)



**Jamen Gabriela Hrahaňová**  
 Director, ERGO Network

Ms Hrahaňová thanked all the speakers, the moderators, participants, national members, staff, and all those who took the time to join the event. She reaffirmed ERGO Network’s commitment to work together with the European institutions and all stakeholders to ensure that Roma rights and inclusion become a reality also at the grassroots level.





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*To find out more about this event, or about ERGO Network's work,  
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