

THE EXPOSURE AND CUMULATIVE MARGINATION OF ROMA IN EUROPE: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY

by

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ABSTRACT

The Roma, one of the Europe's oldest minorities, has endured a long history of discrimination and disadvantage throughout Europe, which has only recently begun to be acknowledged and addressed. The Romani population occupies a peculiar stance and despite its distinct visible ethnicity, it has no political entity of its own. Moreover, being widely dispersed throughout Europe and beyond, the Roma have no territorial identity of their own. In today's world of interconnectedness and communication networks, new possibilities are arising that pose a challenge to identity construction processes as well as new risks and vulnerabilities. The transitional political efforts in the European Union for ensuring relief and inclusion of Roma population have been insignificant due to the lack of determination at the grassroots levels or because of the resistance of the majority population. The major challenges faced by these marginalized communities are the exclusion from basic environmental services, such as the supply of drinking water, sanitation, education, employment, healthcare, and infrastructure. Moreover, these communities are disproportionately affected by ecological hazards, such as pollution and environmental degradation stemming from waste dumps and landfills, contaminated sites, or dirty industries. The repercussions are devastating health impacts ranging from infectious diseases to mental health problems. Unequal exposure to environmental and segregated ghettos is one of many dimensions of anti-gypsyism, that is, the racially motivated discrimination and exclusion of persons stigmatized as 'gypsies' in public

perceptions. Thereby, this research expounds upon the probable aspects to tackle the problems faced by Roma communities in and across Europe.

Keywords: *Roma, Racism, Social Integration, Stigmatization, Marginalization, Segregation, Antigypsyism.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Roma, one of the oldest communities in Central and Eastern Europe, the Roma have long faced prejudice and hardship; they frequently live and work in impoverished conditions. The Council of Europe states that it includes the following groups: *Travelers, Yenish*, and the populations classified as *Gens du voyage*; individuals who identify as *Gypsies*; and *Sinti, Kale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari, Balkan Egyptians, and Eastern groups (Dom, Lom, and Abdal)*. Like the Council of Europe, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (henceforth referred to as FRA) uses the word "Travellers" where appropriate to draw attention to initiatives that particularly involve the Roma diaspora. Typically, these populations are shut out of access to essential environmental services consisting of waste management, proper sanitation, and drinking water supplies.

Racial discrimination is pervasive, and people are treated distinctively based solely on their ethnic origin in Europe in the twenty-first century, even in spite of the various laws and mechanisms put in place to guarantee human rights and liberties. These differences are not justified in any manner. Although International human rights law forbids these kinds of abuses, racial discrimination is the common denominator among the majority of human rights breaches that the Roma population experiences. Furthermore, their underrepresentation in the political and administrative spheres has led to severe persecution and hardships, making it challenging to successfully assimilate into the mainstream society while preserving their distinctive cultural and social identities.

Furthermore, because of their vast dispersion throughout Europe and even beyond, these groups are stripped of their traits and abandoned from their native land. They always have been a minority; thus, they have a forced identity that is characterized by humiliation and social and political exclusions. They are therefore viewed by society as middle-class, marginal, or social outcasts, and as such, they are the target of assimilationist initiatives in addition to being ostracized and disregarded in the society.

Pejorative stigmas and attitudes are evident in the widespread antipathy toward these communities, which revolves around the imminent issues of healthcare, housing, labor, and access to high-quality education. The Romani people have been stigmatized and segregated as a result of social rejection, a lack of reciprocity, and a defensive mechanism that takes the form of an exclusive traditional character.

Prejudices and stereotypes, labelling, hate speech and hate crimes, individual, institutional, and structural discrimination, residential and educational segregation of Romani individuals, misrepresentation, forced settlements, proletarianization, the state's passive role in defending the rights of Roma, the absence of information about Roma in mainstream curricula, ignoring their history of subjugation, and the selective application of laws and policies are, above all, the common driving factors for their repressions and subordination in the society.

The research paper deals with the discrimination and exclusion of Roma, the long-term implications of contemporary societal injustices and disparities, the denigration of Romani uniqueness as well as poor morale among Roma, the continuation of violence and hostile atmosphere, the limited effectiveness of social inclusion programs aimed at Roma because of hostility toward them, and the ongoing subjugation of the Roma minority.

Additionally, in order to avoid the oppression that is inflicted upon the Roma community, this research proposes that mainstream legislative changes be introduced, apart from bolstering the growth of Roma culture and the arts as well as the creation of transitional justice systems with the help of international agencies and non-governmental organizations in order to combat anti-gypsyism.

2. THE CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH THE ROMA ETHNICITY

2.1. Introduction

There is not enough thought, and focus given to this peculiar interpretation of Roma tradition as nomadic livelihood and the challenges pertaining to their rights and civil liberties, in compliance to the preeminent national and international conventions and established norms. The unending impediments pertaining to the racialization and societal exclusion of Roma communities throughout the EU are often detrimental due to a lack of local adjudication and

opposition from the non-Roma community, the efforts made by EU Member States in the local and national domains frequently fall short of resolving the difficulties surrounding Roma integration. The four main issues need to be successfully handled in order to achieve inclusion, which is frequently misunderstood and recognized in the fields of work, housing, healthcare, and education. These issues include the struggle against stigmatization, discrimination, segregation, and anti-gypsyism.

The issue in discussion at present is detrimental and confines the Roma people to two fundamental perceptions: discrimination, exclusion as a social stratum within society, and exoticization, as a distinct group that evolved into social exclusion as a result of ethnic integration and cultural distinctiveness. The Roma diaspora has expanded considerably in many countries and remained elevated in segregation and unstable opportunities to work despite their status as an ethnic minority throughout the EU is not entirely uniform. Consequently, a number of underlying issues appear to have an impact on how the Roma ethnic minorities become entangled in institutionalized discrimination and anti-gypsyism during their efforts to cease active participation.

Roma constitute the most populous ethnic minority in the region, and are estimated at between 10 and 12 million, of which about 6 million inhabit in the European Union. The Roma communities have always been subjected to prejudices in housing, work, education, and healthcare, along with societal exclusion, economic, political, and cultural oppression and spatial segregation that has resulted in ghettoization and impoverished conditions.

The gravity of this situation is underscored by empirical data from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). According to the FRA's survey of Roma across 10 EU Member States published in October 2022, 80% of Roma surveyed remain at risk of poverty, compared with an EU average of 17%, representing no meaningful change from the previous survey conducted in 2016.¹ Moreover, approximately 22% of Roma lived in households without access to tap water and 33% had no indoor toilet, underscoring the acute material deprivation that structural exclusion has produced.²

2.2. The Roma during the Transition: Novel Difficulties

¹ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Roma in 10 European Countries' (FRA, October 2022) <<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2022/roma-survey-2021-main-results>> accessed 4 September 2026.

² European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Roma in 10 European Countries' (FRA, October 2022) <<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2022/roma-survey-2021-main-results>> accessed 4 September 2026.

The Romani people suffered greatly in ways never experienced prior by the defeat of Communist rule. Firstly, these communities lost their generally stable economic status and encountered difficulties with financial hardship and impoverishment. These communities are believed to be primarily not well-developed, with lack of professional and educational achievement, that have inhibited them from being sustainably incorporated into the expanding competitive economy. Romani manufacturing and agricultural labourers became further excluded as a consequence of the disintegration of the social proletariat, which took on Romani trait. Many of the original Romani community's cultural characteristics, including kinship connections, solidarity, crafts, and living were lost by this section of the Romani populace.

These communities also experienced tremendous deprivation; some of the most marginalized during the transition attempted to resurrect one of their "cultural skills" vis- a-vis- begging, which increased mainstream society's anti-Roma sentiment and social hatred. Many acts of violence based on racism and scapegoating towards the most susceptible and detested sections of Roma society were fuelled by the political unrest, economic crisis, weakening of state institutions and local authorities, and the burgeoning conservative tendencies stemming from the revival of nationalism that defined the period of transitional. In actuality, racial violence is what first cautioned national and international authorities to the problems facing the Roma people.

The scale of racially motivated violence targeting Roma during this transitional period was documented by international monitoring bodies. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) recorded incidents of assault, arson, and property destruction directed at Roma settlements across Central and Eastern Europe throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, observing that such acts were frequently accompanied by political rhetoric that scapegoated Roma communities for broader social and economic anxieties.³ These patterns reinforced a climate of institutional impunity that allowed discriminatory norms to become embedded in governmental structures, making them significantly harder to dismantle in subsequent decades.⁴

³ OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, 'Understanding Anti-Roma Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Roma and Sinti Communities: A Practical Guide' (ODIHR, 2016) <<https://hatecrime.osce.org/anti-roma-hate-crime>> accessed 4 September 2026.

⁴ Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, 'Roma and Travellers in Europe' Resolution 1740 (2010), para 3; see also European Commission, 'EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2020-2030' (COM(2020) 620 final, October 2020).

2.3. The Under-Representation of Roma Communities in the Public Administration

The political stance of the Roma population, who are actually highly organized in terms of their local representation through civil society organizations, is remarkable to comprehend. The Romanian government's effort to address the national inclusion strategies concerning Roma representation unintentionally backfired, leading to a meagre elaboration and implementation of evidence-based development programs and schemes aimed at strengthening and supporting underprivileged and excluded Roma communities living in clustered scenarios facing the public administration. Additionally, there is a lack of cohesive transitory managerial and leadership roles accessible at the grassroots level for the Roma population, whose involvement and confidence in their political parties and civic organizations that function inside local government administration have decreased over time. Furthermore, when it comes to representation and decision-making, the Roma communities' members are rarely consulted. As a result, their social and economic institutions at various administrative levels have deteriorated, which has gradually resulted in bribery, corruption, or failure of the many stakeholders.

Establishing a rapport with local government bodies, overcoming ritualistic involvement structures, escalating disagreements or conflicts, and discovering that participation cannot be coerced and imposed irrationally. Additionally, a predisposition towards the Roma should be a prerequisite for developing new strategies that take into account the needs of those involved in this type of decision-making process at the national or local levels of administration in order to alleviate the problems that the Roma face and conform to their needs in determining and achieving the goals set by the community representatives in order to implement social integration policies and strategies that ensure participation that avoids demented and superficial methods that could negatively impact the Roma communities and result in their exclusion from society.

The consequences of this structural exclusion were starkly illustrated by the results of the June 2024 elections to the European Parliament, in which no Roma candidate was elected despite Roma constituting the largest ethnic minority in the EU.⁵ Three of the four Roma Members of the European Parliament in the outgoing legislature were not placed on electoral lists by their respective parties,

⁵ Tomas Jungwirth, 'Europe's Largest Minority Left Without Political Representation in the EP' (Review of Democracy, 31 July 2024) <<https://revdem.ceu.edu/2024/07/31/roma-in-the-ep/>> accessed 4 September 2026.

reflecting what Roma rights advocates have described as a deepening pattern of institutional neglect driven by latent anti-gypsyism within European political parties.⁶

2.4. Housing: Inadequate Facilities, Isolated Spaces, and Over-Crowding

The problem of housing inequalities, lack of access to financial assistance and hypothecations to mortgages, rising housing costs, congestion, poor sanitation, insecurity of tenure, evictions, and spatial concentration or segregation are among the perplexing issues that the Roma populations in the EU encounter. It is crucial to recognize the segmentation endured by these urban minority, who are benefited from acquaintances and neighbourhood connections to close gaps and offer vital services for a living. This segregation has evolved into a survival strategy. In fact, at least 45% of homes do not have access to basic facilities like a kitchen, bathroom, shower, or electricity.

The scale of this housing deprivation is quantitatively documented. Research by the European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network confirms that many Roma continue to live in informal settlements and segregated neighbourhoods under inadequate conditions, with severe environmental consequences, and that rising housing costs combined with the inability to prove legal ownership expose many Roma to forced evictions and homelessness.⁷ The FRA's 2024 Roma Survey further found that overcrowding shows no overall improvement at the EU level despite some gains in reducing housing deprivation more broadly, and confirms that the housing gap between Roma and Traveller communities and the general population remains substantial.⁸

However, it is important to highlight that the strong rejection of one's ethnic background associated with challenges in adjusting to new housing inhabitants, which are exacerbated by

⁶ Roma for Europe, 'EU Citizens of Roma Descent are Lacking Representation in the European Parliament' (Roma for Europe, 2024) <<https://romaforeurope.org/work/articles/Roma-representation-European-Parliament>> accessed 4 September 2026.

⁷ European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network, 'Research Report on Roma Access to Quality and Affordable Housing' (ERGO Network, November 2023) <<https://ergonetWORK.org/2023/11/research-report-on-roma-access-to-quality-and-affordable-housing/>> accessed 4 September 2026.

⁸ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European Countries: Perspectives from the Roma Survey 2024' (FRA, October 2025) <<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2025/roma-survey-2024>> accessed 4 September 2026.

animosity from neighbours who are mostly from non-Roma communities. As a result, the majority of the EU's housing conditions negatively impact vulnerable populations, particularly those who are Roma. Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and other international and regional human rights accords provide the right to sufficient housing. Everybody should be guaranteed a minimal level of security of tenure by the governments, which would protect them legally from threats, harassment, and forcible removal. Affordably priced housing should also be included, and programs ought to give priority to the Roma groups that are now the most vulnerable. It is clear that a large number of Roma people live in slums or informal settlements with inadequate security and have evaded the obligations required under international law.

2.5. Education: Inequitable Outcomes and Institutional Prejudices

Millions of Roma people in Europe suffer greatly from low literacy rates and inadequate or non-existent educational opportunities. Roma people have substantially lower primary school enrolment and successful completion rates throughout Europe. There is a growing realization among national governments and lawmakers that enhancing the educational options attainable by Roma is a prerequisite for ending the poverty cycle that ensnared many of the Romani inhabitants. Nonetheless, a lot of Roma people continue to experience severe violations of their right to education, which includes equal access to secondary, technical, vocational, free and compulsory education.

Several Member States neglect to put into practice and adequately support policies that would encourage marginalized Roma people to be included in public education systems. Consequently, in spite of beneficial legislative reforms, they fail to eradicate entrenched discriminatory behaviours and mentalities within their educational systems. The startling rates of educational marginalization and underachievement are caused by a number of factors, such as the financial and geographic obstacles that children residing in Romani settlements must overcome to receive an education; the high expense of transportation, clean clothes, and school supplies; the dearth of resources for teaching the Romani language; and the extremely depressing impact of potential discrimination when seeking jobs, etc.

These structural barriers produce alarming educational outcomes. Research published by the European School Education Platform indicates that, due to restricted access to quality schooling, Roma children experience dropout rates of approximately 70%, compared with 9.7% for the general

population.⁹ In addition, the FRA's 2024 Roma Survey found that 46% of Roma and Traveller children attend schools where all or most pupils are Roma or Traveller, confirming that school segregation remains deeply entrenched and that the EU's own target of reducing to fewer than one in five Roma children attending predominantly Roma schools is extremely unlikely to be met by 2030.¹⁰

The Roma communities must be supported in their efforts to increase early childhood education participation, formal education beyond lower secondary education completion, and awareness of how education affects an individual's social and economic well-being along with their ability to participate in society. Based on their adherence to important international human rights agreements, the education policy that is conceived needs to guarantee basic equal rights to education. The objective of the EU framework is to enhance impartial and effective distribution of inclusive, high-quality mainstream education.

The segregation is evident when students with disabilities or those from a particular socioeconomic, racial, or cultural background are concentrated in particular classrooms or schools. The children's entitlement to a quality education on par with those of non-Roma populations is being violated by this racial classification and isolation.

2.6. High Unemployment Rates and Informal Activities

Enshrined in Articles 15 and 29 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union are the rights to work and to unrestricted placement assistance. Any discrimination in employment and working situations, including pay and expulsion, on the basis of race or ethnic origin is prohibited by the European Union Racial Equality Guidelines. The European Union Roma Framework seeks to improve effective equal access to high-quality, long-term employment through the recognition of these rights.

There is a close relationship between this type of social exclusion and preceding educational characteristics. Due to their ethnic origins and segregation, Roma individual's inferior

⁹ European School Education Platform, 'Addressing School Segregation: Promoting Inclusion of Roma Communities' (European Commission, 2023) <<https://school-education.ec.europa.eu/en/discover/news/promoting-inclusion-roma-communities>> accessed 4 September 2026.

¹⁰ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European Countries: Perspectives from the Roma Survey 2024' (FRA, October 2025) <<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2025/roma-survey-2024>> accessed 4 September 2026.

educational standards hindered their ability to grow academically and in their respective fields. Due to assimilation policies that frequently provided full-time employment and job security, Roma were relatively active in the labor market during the socialist era in the Eastern Bloc. However, as borders opened and more people migrated from neighbouring or former communist countries, Roma were frequently supplanted by workers from those states.

With new rules in the reformed states, the Roma essentially lost their occupations and job opportunities in the region, forcing them to leave and relocate elsewhere in search of employment and livelihood. Furthermore, a great number of people attempted to find work in Western nations but were compelled to relocate due to discriminatory policies and legislation targeting migrant labourers. In the Central and Eastern European states there is not only exclusion today but also exploitation. The high unemployment and informal jobs are the characteristics of this fraction of the populace. According to the FRA's 2022 survey, approximately 57% of Roma of working age were not in paid work, compared with an EU average non-employment rate of around 28%, indicating a significant but not total exclusion from the labour market.

The FRA's 2022 survey found that only 43% of Roma were in paid work, compared with an EU average employment rate of 72% in 2020.¹¹ The most recent FRA Roma Survey data from 2024 indicates a modest improvement, with 54% of Roma and Traveller respondents aged 20 to 64 engaged in some form of paid work, though a significant gender disparity persists: only 38% of Roma and Traveller women in this age group were in employment compared with 69% of men, and the gender employment gap has in fact widened since 2016.¹²

The Roma community survive in precarious conditions such as engaging in traditional occupations, such as trade, production, sale of handicrafts, scrap collection, street selling, metalworking and relying on agricultural produce. Thus, this will result in informal and short-term activities boosting the informal economy where their access to social services will be restricted by the formal requirements of residence registration, particularly in settlements, which has made their situation even worse.

¹¹ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Roma in 10 European Countries' (FRA, October 2022) <<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2022/roma-survey-2021-main-results>> accessed 4 September 2026.

¹² European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European Countries: Perspectives from the Roma Survey 2024' (FRA, October 2025) <<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2025/roma-survey-2024>> accessed 4 September 2026.

Not only is exclusion occurring now in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, but also exploitation. This segment of the population is characterized by significant unemployment and informal labor. According to FRA data, the proportion of Roma not in paid employment is significantly higher than the general population average, though the gap has narrowed modestly in recent years as recorded by the 2024 Roma Survey. The Roma community makes ends meet by working in traditional jobs including trading, manufacturing, selling handicrafts, scrap gathering, street vending, and metallurgy, as well as by depending on agricultural products. Their condition has been made worse by the official and regulatory demands of residence registration and enrolment, especially in settlements, which would limit their access to social assistance and instead encourage short-term and informal activities that support the informal economy.

2.7. Obstacles in Accessing Healthcare Services

Everyone's right to receive medical treatment and preventative healthcare under the guidelines set by national laws and practices is enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, in compliance with Article 35 of the same Charter. The exclusive duty of the Member States is to safeguard and enhance human health. The Racial Equality Directive's requirements, which forbid discrimination based on race or ethnic origin and promote equitable treatment, must be implemented by the Member States. The European Union Roma Framework seeks to enhance equitable access to high-quality healthcare and social services and to better Roma health. Roma people are among the most disadvantaged minority community in the European Union in terms of healthcare services. The most often mentioned obstacles were trouble signing up for medical services, particularly primary care.

This barrier may come from within the health system, such as the implementation of arbitrary rules like refusing to register people without a fixed address, or it may come from outside the health services, such as the lack of required documentation to meet legal eligibility and conditions for using health services. Common obstacles include the inflexibility and accessibility of services, which makes it difficult to schedule appointments for treatment; insufficient evaluation and fragmented care across various services; and a lack of information about the population's size, health needs, and service utilization.

The Roma communities' experiences and perceptions of healthcare barriers are most striking. These include prejudice based on segregation and unfriendly attitudes of healthcare personnel when providing appointments, medical instructions, or information on health

promotion, which results in poor relationships and communication between the health service providers. In addition, a lack of understanding about how to use and navigate various health facilities, including those related to mental health, sexual orientation, and dentistry.

The health consequences of these structural inequalities are severe and well-documented. According to the FRA's 2022 survey, Roma men and women live, on average, nine and eleven years less respectively than the general population in the surveyed countries.¹³ While the FRA's 2024 Roma Survey noted a slight improvement, the life expectancy gap remains approximately 7 to 8 years below the general population, and discrimination experienced in healthcare settings has doubled since the previous survey, rendering the EU's own 2030 target of reducing the life expectancy gap by 50% extremely unlikely to be achieved.¹⁴

2.8. Manifestation of Anti-Gypsyism: Harassment and Violence a form of Institutional Racism.

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the Council of Europe, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), and the association against anti-gypsyism—a cooperation of organizations promoting equal safeguards for Roma, Sinti, and Travellers—underline anti-gypsyism and anti-Roma prejudice as a form of Roma discrimination and marginalization in the present-day EU.

The term "anti-gypsyism" refers to a historically founded resilient, intricate, and traditional racism contrary to ethnic groups identified under the stigma "gypsy" or other comparable terms. It incorporates the following: first, homogenizing and essentializing thoughts and an overview of these communities; second, attributing specific characteristics to them; and third, discriminating social structures and violent acts against Roma. There is no consensus or basic comprehension of the phenomenon.

The definition of anti-Gypsyism is an idealistic and amalgamating ideology that gives rise to a particularly vicious and persistent form of racism. It is also characterized by recurrence, trivialization, dehumanization of the victims, and exploitation of hate speech and apprehension.

¹³ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Roma in 10 European Countries' (FRA, October 2022) <<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2022/roma-survey-2021-main-results>> accessed 4 September 2026.

¹⁴ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European Countries: Perspectives from the Roma Survey 2024' (FRA, October 2025) <<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2025/roma-survey-2024>> accessed 4 September 2026.

This particular type of racism still appears frequently under various forms of discrimination and stigmatization, all of which lead to systemic socioeconomic disadvantages and circumstances of widespread exclusion. When borders and political authority were established during the establishment of nation states, Roma communities were excluded because they were not viewed as belonging to "the nation," but rather as nomadic. This is how anti-gypsyism originated at the intersection of identity, belonging, and territoriality in the midst of nation-state building processes. More significantly, the Roma communities have endured challenges and impediments for a very long time; as a result, their deprivation is accepted as "normal," prolonging their social marginalization and shame. Therefore, it eventually increases anti-gypsy sentiment and feeds hostility towards the Roma minority. Consequently, the European Union added the term "Anti-Gypsyism" to its language in 2005. Because of this essentialist philosophy, racism persists and is violent, dehumanizing victims and inciting fear and hatred in the society.

The persistence of anti-gypsyism has been quantitatively confirmed by recent survey data. The FRA's 2024 Roma Survey found that approximately 31% of Roma and Traveller respondents reported experiencing discrimination based on their ethnic background in the 12 months preceding the survey across everyday areas of life including work, education, health, housing, and public services, representing no substantial change compared with the 2016 figure of 26%.¹⁵ Crucially, the same survey found that under-reporting of discrimination has worsened, suggesting that official figures significantly understate the actual prevalence of discriminatory treatment and that achieving any of the EU's 2030 anti-discrimination targets requires urgent structural intervention.¹⁶

3. RELEVANCE TO THE EU POLICY TO TACKLE ROMA EXCLUSION IN RECENT YEARS.

The issues that the Roma communities face is in fact intricate, varied, and frequently deeply ingrained. Cultural-ethnic concerns and socio-economic exclusion are two ways that the Roma problem expresses itself, and they encompass two different strategies for concealing

¹⁵ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European Countries: Perspectives from the Roma Survey 2024' (FRA, October 2025)
<<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2025/roma-survey-2024>> accessed 4 September 2026.

¹⁶ European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 'Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European Countries: Perspectives from the Roma Survey 2024' (FRA, October 2025)
<<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2025/roma-survey-2024>> accessed 4 September 2026.

the ever-present complications. The question that needs to be addressed, regardless, is how well the EU's enacted policies can address and mitigate the underlying issues that contribute to Roma marginalization and discrimination throughout the EU.

3.1. The Legal Framework of the European Union (EU)

Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, also known as the TEU, identifies equality and reverence for human rights, especially the rights of members of minorities, as integral norms within the EU. Comparably, among the overarching objectives of the EU listed in Article 3 of TEU acts as to combat social exclusion and prejudice as well as fostering the economic growth, social cohesion, and solidarity among member states. Following this, the legal foundation for EU action to prevent discrimination on six grounds including racial or ethnic origin as specified under Article 19 TFEU is provided by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, or TFEU. Furthermore, discrimination on any basis, including race, is forbidden by the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights. Furthermore, in significant fields like labor, education, healthcare, and housing, discrimination, including harassment based on race or ethnic origin is explicitly prohibited by the Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC). Member states have an obligation under the Council Framework decision in combatting certain types and expressions of racism and xenophobia through criminal law to make hate speech and hate crimes, including those committed against the Roma community in particular, throughout Europe.

Additionally, victims of prejudiced or discriminatory offenses are given special consideration in the directives and guidelines recommending and establishing minimum standards on their civil rights, support, and security.

3.2. EU Policies and Compliance Regulations

While the EU serves as a facilitator, it is the EU Member States' primary duty to improve the standard of living and integration of the Roma population. Significant advancements have been made in the development of EU policies aimed at integrating Roma people into society over the last few decades.

3.2.1. The Initial Efforts and Initiatives

The European Commission sought national actions to accelerate the socioeconomic integration of Roma people in accession nations with sizable Roma populations as early as the second half of the 1990s. The European Council first recognized in December of 2007 that Roma inhabitants of the European Union encountered "a very particular situation" and urged all Member States to modify their present policies in order to promote Roma inclusivity on the whole of Europe. The Commission had also recommended the transposition of the Race Equality Doctrine in the mid-2000s for the inclusiveness of these marginalized communities diffused across the EU.

A reaffirmed dedication was displayed in July 2008 after the Commission approved a communication on non-discrimination and equal chances, emphasizing the importance of the instruments available to advance the social inclusion of Roma populations residing throughout the EU. Consequently, the 2008 European Roma Summit sought to encourage and support a collective commitment from the EU institutions, Member States, and Civil Society. The Commission emphasized the need for improved Roma integration once more in its message on the economic and social integration of the Roma in Europe.

3.2.2. EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020

In an attempt to combat the social and economic marginalization and prejudice against the Roma, the Commission developed an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. This framework promotes equal access to four critically important areas such as: housing, job, health care, and education. Furthermore, it became the duty of the Member States to close the disparities in public utility access between the Roma and the non-Roma, taking into account the above-enumerated underlying factors.

In order to make sure that Member States adopt an extensive approach to Roma mainstream inclusion, the Commission proposed the adoption of National Roma Integration Methods. These methods are meant to ensure the successful operation of policies, legal and funding instruments, as well as coordination, consultation and observation strategies by EU institutions, national governments, local authorities, and organizations from the civil society.

In addition, a council recommendation on successful Roma integration strategies in the Member States reinforces the EU set of rules. This recommendation focuses on two horizontal

domains: anti-discrimination and poverty elevation; it also aims to accelerate Member State involvement in addressing and reaffirming their commitment to restoring tranquility and inclusiveness of Roma communities within the EU.

3.2.3. EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation for 2020-2030

On October 7, 2020, the European Commission adopted the EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Integration, and Participation for 2020–2030, coinciding with the end of the EU framework for Roma assimilation and cohesion in 2020. This new 10-year plan is one of the non-discriminatory initiatives was unveiled and presented in the commission work programme and from the outcomes of consultations and assessments performed by the Commission based on information collected from all Member States, Non-governmental organizations, International organizations, and the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).

In addition to the current four pillar approach i.e., housing, healthcare, employment, and education, this strategic framework attempts to promote equality, inclusion, and participation. By promoting equality and fighting prejudice and anti-gypsyism, along with encouraging Roma involvement in political, economic, and cultural life, the purpose is to enhance the preceding socio-economic inclusion method. In addition, to implement an anti-racism and anti-xenophobic action plan and update the goals to be more precise, quantifiable, and achievable. The Council then approved a recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion, and participation on March 12, 2021, encouraging Member States to effectively combat and tackle discrimination against Roma people and to support their inclusion in the most important areas of housing, employment, education, and healthcare.

The 2021 recommendations and suggestions replaced the previous legislations and broadened the application of its scope to include strategies to combat prejudice both offline and online; to tackle structural and multiple forms of discrimination against the Roma, particularly against women, children, LGBTI individuals, and people with impairments; and to support initiatives and campaigns aimed at enhancing multi-cultural recognition of Roma in the wider society. The recommendation emphasizes how crucial it is for Roma community to have an equal voice in society and to participate in the formulation of public policies.

However, empirical evidence suggests that the ambitions of this strategic framework are unlikely to be realised on schedule. The FRA's 2024 Roma Survey, covering 10 EU Member States and three accession countries and representing approximately 86% of the EU's estimated Roma population, confirmed that EU countries are not likely to meet the 2030 targets on anti-gypsyism, discrimination, participation, or health, with only a small number of Member States on track to meet objectives in poverty, education, employment, and housing.¹⁷ The European Commission's own implementation report published in September 2024 similarly concluded that the current level of ambition across Member States is insufficient to guarantee the achievement of the minimum progress benchmarks set by the EU 2030 targets, and that more urgent and targeted action is required.¹⁸

4. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having up to 12 million Roma confined to poverty throughout the EU and its surrounding jurisdictions, the Roma and their communities are thought to pose one of the greatest challenges to achieving social integration within the EU. These communities deal with many sorts of hardships, including social marginalization and exclusion, in addition to limitations on socio-professional integration. Early social hazards detection and corrective action can have a positive impact on averting social exclusion and marginalization of this nature in the society.

In the dearth of possibilities for socio-professional inclusion, prospects to enhance healthcare, adequate living conditions, and participation in initial and continuing education, the duty of national and local authorities is to provide access to basic community facilities and amenities. This includes encouraging the societal integration of vulnerable Roma communities, whose future depends on their ability to successfully develop into a group who are cognizant of their rights, interests, and power in the society.

¹⁸ EURoma Network, 'European Commission Publishes Report on the Implementation of NRSFs' (EURoma, January 2025) <<https://www.euromanet.eu/news/european-commission-publishes-report-on-the-implementation-of-nrsfs/>> accessed 4 September 2026.

For the sake of their liberties and institutionalized recognition, the Roma people must take a more active role in problem solving and put an additional effort. This indicates that a larger section of society has a more thorough understanding of the Romani situation, which should be acknowledged by both the underprivileged group and society as a whole. The majority of population's firmly established preconceptions and stereotypes concerning Roma represent sentiments of rejection, social isolation, and discrimination. Therefore, the ideas of inclusiveness, equality, and identity held by the majority society have been and will continue to be contested by the Roma unless these problems are identified and redressed according to the established regulations present. The notion of "hyper-ghettoized" in Eastern Europe and expulsion from Western Europe has succinctly explained on the differing treatment that the Roma experience in contrast to other minority groups owing to their weaker position and limited decision-making in upholding the status quo in the society at large. Currently, this results in a dilemma for the Romani community, as the Romani demand for equal opportunity and justice appears to be in opposition to the majority of society's intolerance of the Roma's peculiar identity as a whole, and the Roma's effort to preserve and strengthen their ethnic identity retains their unequal treatment in the society.

Therefore, the purpose of this research study is to recognize and comprehend the sedentary problems associated with prejudice and marginalization; how these challenges have evolved over time in tandem with larger social alterations; along with how these difficulties manifest in national and local legislations that have spatial ramifications to avert the issues that continue to persist even today.

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