

Situation of Roma in the European Union

A general overview



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Index

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1.1 Introduction	5
1.2 Socio-economic context	6
• Demography and health	
• Education	
• Employment	
• Housing	
1.3 Political context	9
• Entering the twenty-first century: placing the Roma issue on the EU agenda	
• 2008 and beyond: mainstreaming the Roma on the EU's political agenda	
1.4 Strengthening institutional mechanisms	11
Footnotes	13





Situation of Roma in the European Union

1.1 Introduction

The Roma population has historically experienced widespread poverty, exclusion, discrimination and, occasionally, violence on the European continent. Within the EU's jurisdiction, despite a small number of effective private and public initiatives in specific contexts in the past decades, the Roma communities have not reaped the benefits of sustained economic growth. Except in particular member states, where the manifest demographic weight of Roma citizens compelled an acknowledgement by civil society and state actors of the need to address the issues of inequality, segregation and discrimination specific to the Roma, Roma-related issues remained overwhelmingly absent from the political agenda of most member states as well as the EU until the dawn of the twenty-first century. However, a number of transformations in political, institutional and economic fields have taken place since the turn of the century, which are generating adequate conditions for a qualitative leap in the social inclusion of, and the reduction of the inequalities experienced by, Roma persons. The expansion of the EU to countries with large Roma minorities, accompanied by large-scale Roma migratory movements towards Western Europe, has significantly increased the salience of Roma-related issues on the European agenda. Meanwhile, Central and Eastern European states have had an unprecedented opportunity to use Structural Funds, in particular the European Social Fund (ESF), for the economic and social development of the Roma population.

The achievements and shortcomings of the 2000-2006 programming period in EU member states stimulated a renewed commitment to turn Structural Funds into a potent financial and political instrument for the inclusion of Roma persons. The Structural Funds regulations for the 2007-2013 programming period, to which we will return in the third chapter, were defined by enhanced flexibility in their operation; placed added emphasis on targeting ethnic minorities; and increased the importance of transnational projects. The Roma population,¹ present throughout the EU, and sharing a situation of exclusion and discrimination in all member states, were a particularly pertinent target group for the 2007-2013 programming period. Indeed, the inequities lived by the Roma population are outstandingly transnational in nature, because they are common to all member states, albeit to different degrees.² Hitherto excluded from policies designed to combat social exclusion, both Roma and governments were therefore given an unprecedented opportunity to take advantage of the funds and actions targeting access to employment and social services, implemented within the framework of the Structural Funds.

This introductory chapter examines the context within which EURoma was created, tracing the economic, political and institutional processes that conditioned its initial development. It expounds the socio-economic conditions under which the European Roma minority lives, emphasising national divergences before focusing on the radical political and institutional transformations that have been taking place at the European level and that are facilitating a more effective use of Structural Funds for the reduction of the inequities experienced by the Roma.



1.2 Socio-economic context

The Roma minority experiences significantly lower living standards than the majority population in all EU member states, historically determined by social prejudices, stereotypes,³ ghettoisation and a lack of political commitment to their social inclusion. The European Council has therefore asserted that: ‘Although the Roma within the European Union and its neighbouring countries have the same rights and duties as the rest of the population, they in fact form a group that is disadvantaged in several respects and is particularly vulnerable to social exclusion, poverty and discrimination [...]’.⁴

The Roma population is heterogeneous and has been undergoing profound changes in the past decades, the most noteworthy of which being the elimination of traditional labour activities and of nomadic lifestyles in some member states, urban migration, and more recently, migration from Eastern Europe to the rest of the EU as a consequence of the rise of unemployment rates and worsening living standards. However, generally speaking, a wide and in some cases widening gap defines the living conditions (in the fields of health, education, labour and housing) of the Roma and the majority population.⁵ Crucially, these social fields must not be taken as separate and determined by distinct factors, but as elements of a whole: each social field influences and is influenced by other fields. This understanding is increasingly informing the EU’s integrated policy towards the Roma: it has repeatedly emphasised that a holistic approach, which seeks to redress geographical, national/ethnic and income inequalities EU-wide, should systematically and concurrently target education, professional training, employment, health and housing through effective and efficient fiscal and organisational instruments.

These socio-economic indicators demonstrate that Roma-related issues affect all member states similarly, thereby constituting an essentially *European* problem, which requires a *European* response and EU leadership in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. Despite a common labour market situation throughout the EU, defined by an insufficient volume of employment and a high degree of temporality, a very intense acceleration in the flow of immigrants, significant differences in the employment rates for women, young people and workers with lower educational levels, a large and increasing proportion of short-term contracts, a deceleration of EU economy’s productivity and its consequent impact and repercussion on the quality of employment. These processes highlight the need to keep active training and employment policies ‘focused’ on combating the exclusion and discrimination of vulnerable population groups. The latter’s expansion has shed light on diverging socio-economic tendencies for the Roma, which affects negatively the EU’s territorial cohesion and undermines the social pillar of the Lisbon Strategy,⁶ has been defined by rising living standards in Western Europe on the one hand, and stagnation or decline in Eastern Europe on the other, affecting particularly the Roma. While a manifest improvement occurred in countries such as Spain, home to more than 650,000 Roma,⁷ the post-1990 context in Central and Eastern European countries was highly detrimental to the Roma minority: the transition to a capitalist economy induced a significant deterioration of the Roma’s socio-economic situation. The transition was accompanied by a significant increase in unemployment rates in Eastern Europe, which disproportionately affected the Roma. While universalisation of welfare provision (especially health) occurred in countries such as Spain, democratisation and market transition were accompanied by privatization of welfare and reduced redistribution in Eastern and Central



Europe. Unlike Spain, the Roma are living in both urban and rural areas, with higher levels of segregation, further isolating them from a dwindling, and less inclusive social protection infrastructure. The lack of progress (in some cases regression) that took place in the living conditions of Roma persons in the decade following the collapse of the Soviet bloc was in part defined by inadequate policy instruments: scant expertise in and traditions of working with relatively isolated Roma communities induced an oscillation between targeted and mainstreaming approaches, identified by the Commission as one of the pitfalls of working towards Roma inclusion.⁸

Demography and health

The health situation of the Roma is particularly troubling: a recent study undertaken within the framework of the EU's Public Health Programme reported that 15 percent of the European Roma population is suffering from a chronic illness or disability, while access to healthcare remains inadequate: 32.5 percent of those Roma persons surveyed had never seen a dentist, while close to 40 percent of Roma women aged 16 and over had never been to the gynecologist (15.9 percent) or had never gone for reasons other than pregnancy (23.9 percent). The systematic difficulties encountered by Roma in accessing health services are in part conditioned by geographical segregation and discrimination.⁹

The health situation of the Roma conditions their life expectancy and their demographic makeup. The European Roma population is significantly younger than the overall population (an average of 25.1 years old in seven member states, compared to 40.24 years in the EU-27; 62.38 percent of the Roma population is under 29 years old, compared to 34.98 percent in the EU-27).¹⁰ Although exact figures are unavailable, the average life expectancy of Roma is expected to be significantly lower than the overall EU population (around 63 years old in Romania).¹¹ Only 2.65 percent of the Roma population is above 65 years old, while the elderly rate reaches 17.04 percent in the EU-27. The child dependency index is 57.77 compared to 23.33 in the EU, while the elderly dependency index reaches 4.11, starkly lower than the EU-27 (24.93).¹² Despite a gradual decline in birth rates among Roma, the replacement index (reflecting the population between 15 and 39 for every 100 people aged 40 to 64) remains significantly higher among Roma (231) than for the overall population (101). As pointed out by the European Commission, the fact that the Roma populations include such a large proportion of young people and children increases the urgent need to break the vicious circle of inter-generational transmission of poverty and severe social exclusion.¹³

Education

Educational levels, affected by housing segregation among other elements, are also profoundly deficient, and determine Roma's limited access to the labour market. According to recent comparative study of 7 EU member states, 43.6 percent of surveyed Roma had not completed primary education, while only 23.7 percent had completed secondary studies and an insignificant minority had a university degree.¹⁴

Segregated education and special-needs schools documented in several central and Eastern European states by the Roma Education Fund and the UNDP, have perpetuated the educational inequities affecting the Roma. In Central and Eastern European states, according to respondents



of a UNDP survey carried out in 2004, circa 14 percent of the children attend classes comprised mostly of Roma, in so-called 'Gypsy schools' or 'special schools for the mentally disabled'.¹⁵ However, desegregation efforts such as the Czech government's abolishment of special education schools targeting Roma and the Hungarian government's substantial investments in integrated schooling, supported by the European Union institutions and the Roma Education Fund,¹⁶ are beginning to bear fruits despite the practical difficulties of overcoming de facto, spatial segregation.

Employment

The European Roma population, because of low educational levels and a lack of professional training as well as discriminative practices by employers, remains significantly marginalised from the formal labour market. This labour market situation is conditioned by traditions and historical reasons, including high segregation levels, educational deficiencies (poor schooling and high early drop-out rates), low participation in regular training schemes, but also inter-subjective perceptions and de facto discrimination in training and employment.¹⁷

Roma unemployment is estimated at 64% in Slovakia, 51% in Bulgaria, 32% in Czech Republic, 25% in Hungary and Romania,¹⁸ 34% in Greece and 14% in Portugal.¹⁹ Roma women are also affected by higher unemployment rates and lower employment opportunities than Roma men. However, Roma participation in informal labour activities is on average four (or more) times more prevalent than in the majority population in the EU.²⁰ High unemployment, underemployment and inactivity rates among Roma, compounded by high poverty rates (including child malnutrition),²¹ The poverty rate of the Roma in generate a cycle of dependency on state welfare that is difficult to break. However, the confinement in informal activities of a high proportion of Roma signifies that large numbers fail to pay the taxes required to finance social security: 'This causes "asymmetrical" Roma participation in social welfare systems: active regarding benefits, limited regarding contributions. This asymmetry can further promote exclusion and ethnic intolerance'.²²

Housing

A relatively high percentage of the Roma population lives in inadequate housing conditions (sub-standard housing or shanty towns),²³ which negatively affects their health situation.²⁴ Roma persons also experience high levels of discrimination on ethnic grounds in their access to housing (from 1 percent in Bulgaria, a low response likely to be conditioned by extensive geographical isolation, to 32 percent in Greece).²⁵ Despite desegregation efforts in various member states (Spain, Hungary), segregation remains manifest in many EU member states, severely hindering Roma access to education, employment and healthcare.²⁶

The aforementioned demographic trends, combined with educational, labour, housing and health data, illustrate the severe challenges that the EU is facing with regards to the improvement of the living conditions of the Roma population. However demographic changes ought to be seen as an opportunity. The Roma have a higher activity rate than the general population (13 points difference in Spain, for example) and a longer and earlier active life. A young, dynamic, growing and *productive* Roma workforce can be an asset for the EU's ageing population, provided adequate measures are implemented, and a massive investment of human



and financial resources is made to facilitate their active participation in a competitive, capital intensive and knowledge-based economy, which is the hallmark of the Lisbon Agenda and of the EU 2020 strategy.²⁷

Progress has been made, in terms of political awareness and involvement, data collection, grassroots intervention and practical know how. Furthermore, the increasing body of successful projects in education, housing and employment, thanks in part to the effective use of Structural Funds, can help to generate a *common* understanding of Roma-related issues – illustrated by the 10 Common Basic Principles engendered by the EU's First Integrated Platform for Roma Inclusion –, and the identification of best practices that can be transferred to other contexts.

1.3 Political Context

Entering the twenty-first century: placing the Roma issue on the EU agenda

In the past decades, a general process of democratisation has been under way in many current EU member states, in Mediterranean countries and post-Soviet regimes. This process has been accompanied by the establishment of Constitutions acknowledging the equality of all citizens under the law, which has provided an unprecedented opportunity for the exercise of the Roma community's civil rights. In legal terms, Roma persons are recognised as full-fledged rather than second-class citizens, which signals an improvement on the historical legacy of legal oppression throughout Europe.

Since the turn of the century, the admission of central and Eastern European countries with significant Roma population has stimulated the EU's growing interest in Roma-related issues. Furthermore, the Lisbon Agenda's focus on cohesion, inclusion and the drastic reduction of poverty levels by 2010,²⁸ as well as the ratification of the European Council's 2000/43 Race and Ethnicity Directive,²⁹ accentuated the relevance of actions targeting Roma exclusion and , discrimination.

The years preceding the admission of Central and Eastern European states in the EU were therefore characterised by a qualitative leap in the interest and involvement of international organisations in Roma-related issues, including the Council of Europe,³⁰ the OSCE (through its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights [ODIHR]),³¹ the World Bank,³² and the United Nations.³³ At the same time, some national administrations, in collaboration with private organisations increasingly placed Roma inclusion on their social agenda. The EU in particular has constituted a crucial vector for placing the Roma on administrations' political agenda, and demonstrated a willingness to take leadership in addressing problems specific to the Roma. While prior to 2007 the Parliament spearheaded legislative attempts to bring prominence to the Roma issue, in 2007 the Council openly enhanced the prominence of the 'very specific situation faced by the Roma' on the EU's social agenda.³⁴ This crucial political moment coincided with the 2007-2013 ESF programming period and the '2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All', which stimulated the EU to 'significantly contribute to national action to promote Roma equality'.³⁵

This new context of political impulse and the creation of financial instruments more prone to act in favour of Roma provided the Managing authorities of Structural Funds with the opportunity



to constitute a transnational network that would work towards developing a common approach under the structural funds.

2008 and beyond: mainstreaming the Roma on the EU's political agenda

Thanks to the initiatives of the European Commission, the European Parliament, national governments and civil society stakeholders, the year 2008 witnessed the occurrence of new high-level political events such as the EU Roma Summit (Brussels, 16 September 2008)³⁶ to mainstream Roma-related issues in social policy implementation. Commission reports and various legal initiatives by the European Parliament and Council have also helped to 'funnel' conceptual principles and a common approach to tackle Roma exclusion and inequalities.³⁷ This process has been consolidated in the EU's 10 Common Basic Principles for Roma Inclusion:³⁸

- 1) Constructive, pragmatic and non-discriminatory policies
- 2) Explicit but not exclusive targeting
- 3) Inter-cultural approach
- 4) Aiming for the mainstream
- 5) Awareness of the gender dimension
- 6) Transfer of evidence-based policies
- 7) Use of Community instruments
- 8) Involvement of regional and local authorities
- 9) Involvement of civil society
- 10) Active participation of the Roma.

However, the renewed thrust to place the specific problems faced by the Roma on the EU's agenda has occurred within a profound economic crisis, which enhanced the relevance of the Lisbon Strategy's social pillar and the EU's commitment to social inclusion and cohesion. The present recession and its disproportionate effect on vulnerable groups are likely to inform the coming EU 2020 objectives,³⁹ which, according to the European Commission's proposal, should put a strong emphasis on "empowering people in inclusive societies". In his Policy Guidelines for the next Commission, José Manuel Durão Barroso emphasised the need for a

'much stronger focus on the social dimension in Europe, at all levels of government. Immediate action will be required to fight unemployment today, but also to look ahead to those facing long-term structural barriers to employment, such as the young and low skilled. At the same time, we need to remember the needs of our ageing population and the most vulnerable in our society. This is the only way for us to ensure strong social cohesion as the hallmark of the European model of society'.⁴⁰



EU resolutions and summits have been translated into a number of concrete initiatives and programmes targeting Roma populations, as well as the creation of new institutional mechanisms for Roma inclusion. The number of studies, conferences and events has increased significantly in the past two years, contributing not merely to giving more visibility to Roma issues but to achieving consensus in terms of the focus of actions targeting Roma

1.4 Strengthening institutional mechanisms

A process of increasing coordination, alignment, harmonisation and information exchange has been taking place in the past few years between public and private organisations, between different governance levels, and between the EU and other international organisations.

- Alignment: common objectives.⁴¹
- Harmonisation: common quantifiable indicators.
- Coordination: identification of the specific competencies of each institution. In this sense a clear division of labour between different organisations, taking into account their respective capacities and roles, is deemed crucial for an effective and efficient implementation of social inclusion policies, and in order to avoid the duplication of programmes.
- Transparent and systematic exchange of information between all stakeholders.

Along these lines, the European Commission has initiated an internal process of coordination between its Directorates-General, and is promoting a multilateral approach to issues specific to the Roma. Vladimir Spidla, former EU Commissioner responsible for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, thus stated that: ‘The Commission is keen to ensure that the situation of the Roma is taken into account in all EU programmes and policies that could be significant in this context. To this end, a group has been set up comprising representatives of all the relevant Directorates-General, with the aim of exchanging best practices, coordinating policies and engaging in dialogue with participants from outside the institutions. The Commission also cooperates with other international organisations working to promote inclusion of the Roma, and is in regular contact with the Council of Europe, the OECD, the World Bank and other major players’.⁴²

These principles have defined, for example, the EU’s Open Method of Coordination in the social field.⁴³ A potentially crucial, if only incipient institutional mechanism promoting active Roma participation as well as adding substance to the notions of alignment, harmonisation and coordination is the Integrated Platform for Roma inclusion, which has emphasised the mobilisation of EU Structural Funds to implement policies to improve the situation of the Roma.⁴⁴

Coordination mechanisms ought to involve both public and private agents. An important example of public-private partnerships was the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015), a private initiative of the Open Society Institute involving initially eight European governments and the World Bank.⁴⁵ The *Acceder* programme developed by the *Fundación Secretariado*



Gitano in Spain and co-financed by the ESF and Spanish municipalities and regional governments was, on its side, a salient example of functioning public-private partnerships.⁴⁶

The latter initiative, among others, demonstrated the opportunities of Structural Funds to 1) correct structural disadvantages and discrimination, but also to 2) articulate policies with a long term perspective, focusing on partnerships and synergies between public and private agents, and between European, national and local levels of governance; and to 3) generate mutual exchange and learning between stakeholders through transnational networks. These opportunities were acknowledged and crystallised in the Structural Fund regulations for the 2007-2013 programming period.⁴⁷

European Network EURoma (www.euromanet.eu) was launched by the Fundación Secretariado Gitano and the Spanish Government to promote a better and more efficient use of the Structural Funds for the social inclusion of the Roma in Europe. 12 Member States (MS) and the European Commission are full members; from each MS two different type of bodies, those Managing Authorities in charge of managing Structural Funds (ESF) and public bodies in charge of policies aimed at the Roma in their respective countries. This network has been running since June 2007.



Notes

¹ European Parliament resolution on the situation of the Roma in the European Union. P6_TA(2005)0151. Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P6-TA-2005-0151&language=EN>

² Transnational processes transcend and interlink domestic contexts and should therefore not be considered as matters that affect and are resolved exclusively by national administrations. New processes such as large-scale migrations of Roma from Eastern and central European member states to the rest of the EU have increased the salience of the notion of transnationality with regards to the Roma.

³ The information media, for instance, has been identified as a key agent of anti-Roma sentiment and discrimination. See European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) (2008) *The social situation of the Roma and their improved access to the labour market in the EU* (IP/A/EMPL/ST/2008-02), pp.24-26.

⁴ Council Conclusions on inclusion of the Roma. 2914th GENERAL AFFAIRS Council meeting. Brussels, 8 December 2008. 16862/08 (Presse 359). Available at: http://www.eu-un.europa.eu/articles/en/article_8359_en.htm and <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st15/st15976-re01.en08.pdf>

⁵ Data collection remains scant regarding the Roma population, but thanks to the efforts of various public and private institutions (including, among others, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, the OSCE, the Decade for Roma Inclusion, the Roma Education Fund, the European Roma Rights Centre and NGOs such as the *Fundación Secretariado Gitano*) an incipient European 'map' of the inequality and poverty experienced by Roma is emerging.

⁶ The social pillar of the Lisbon Strategy (2000-2010) aimed to modernise the European social model by investing in human resources and combating social exclusion. The Member States were expected to invest in education and training, and to conduct an active policy for employment, facilitating the move to a knowledge-based and competitive economy. See paragraph 5, Presidency Conclusions, European Council, *ibid*.

⁷ In Spain, a sustained social and political mobilisation in favour of the Roma Community took place from the 1970s. Until the 1960s, a large percentage of Roma lived on the fringes of Spanish society. During the last stage of the dictatorship and the early years of democracy, the formation of associative movements helped to increase the visibility of Roma in society and to put their issues on the political agenda. Desegregation efforts, including public housing schemes in the 1970s and 1980s benefitted many Roma. Spanish Roma today are sedentary, urban dwellers, concentrated mostly in large cities and towns. A rational balance between targeted and mainstreaming approaches facilitated urban migration defined by low levels of segregation. *The debate target versus mainstreaming has largely been resolved in Spain in a practical way, i.e. by trying, with varying degrees of success, to encourage Roma to take part in existing programmes available to the entire population while at the same time implementing, to a greater or lesser degree depending upon the situation, programmes and initiatives targeting those Roma who are especially disadvantaged or who, for some reasons, fail to take advantage of universal measures.* However, private initiatives such as the *Acceder* programme placed salaried employment as the core of intercultural dialogue and the breakdown of prejudices. Salaried employment has been considered as the most effective way of incorporating more Roma people into the labour market (in terms of the investment/outcomes ratio of such a strategy, relative to other approaches focusing on self-employment). Yet high percentage of Roma in Spain remains in traditional professions and self-employment (more than 50 percent, some in recession or requiring re-conversion). See <http://www.gitanos.org/acceder/>.

⁸ See *Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Non-discrimination and equal opportunities: A renewed commitment. Community Instruments and Policies for Roma Inclusion.* COM(2008) 420. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=88&langId=en&eventsId=105&furtherEvents=yes>.

⁹ Fundación Secretariado Gitano (2009) *Health and the Roma Community, analysis of the situation in Europe. Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Greece, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain* (Madrid: Fundación Secretariado Gitano, Ministerio de Sanidad y Política Social), p.70.

¹⁰ Fundación Secretariado Gitano (2009), *ibid*, p.20

¹¹ UNDP Report (2004) *Avoiding the Dependency Trap: The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe.* Available at <http://europeandcis.undp.org/Home/show/62BBCD48-F203-1EE9-BC5BD7359460A968>

¹² Fundación Secretariado Gitano (2009), *op.cit.*, p.20.

¹³ *Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Non-discrimination and equal opportunities: A renewed commitment. Community Instruments and Policies for Roma Inclusion.* COM(2008) 420. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=88&langId=en&eventsId=105&furtherEvents=yes>

¹⁴ FSG (2009), p.21

¹⁵ 2.5 percent in Bulgaria, 4.7 percent in Romania, 12 percent in the Czech Republic, 16 percent in Hungary, 19 percent in Slovakia, and 27 percent in the Czech Republic. UNDP (2004: 92).

¹⁶ Roma Education Fund (2007) *Advancing Education of Roma in the Czech Republic: Country Assessment and the Roma Education Fund's Strategic Directions* (Budapest: REF), p.10; Roma Education Fund (2007) *Advancing Education of Roma in Hungary: Country Assessment and the Roma Education Fund's Strategic Directions* (Budapest: REF), p.10.

¹⁷ UNDP (2004).

¹⁸ UNDP Report (2004) *Avoiding the Dependency Trap: The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe.* Available at <http://europeandcis.undp.org/Home/show/62BBCD48-F203-1EE9-BC5BD7359460A968>



¹⁹ For data on Greece and Portugal, see *Fundación Secretariado Gitano* (2009) op.cit., pp.24-25. In Spain, at the height of the economic boom (2005), the Roma population registered significantly higher unemployment rates than the general population (13.8 percent compared to 8 percent overall). However, The profound crisis affecting the Spanish labour market (17.8 percent unemployment rate in late 2009) has affected unemployment rates among Roma to a greater extent than the general population (35 percent reduction in contracts in 2009, compared to a 18 percent decline overall for Spain). See *Fundación Secretariado Gitano* (2005) *Roma population and employment, a comparative study* (Madrid: Fundación Secretariado Gitano), p.104. Available at: <http://www.gitanos.org/publicaciones/estudioempleo/madrid/06.pdf>. On recent Roma labour developments, see <http://www.gitanos.org/acceder/>.

²⁰ A recent study by the UNDP reported that 41 percent of the Roma active population worked in informal activities in Bulgaria, 22 percent in the Czech Republic, 42 percent in Hungary, 42 percent in Slovakia, 50 percent in Spain and 70 percent in Romania. UNDP (2004) op.cit., p.35. See also European Parliament study on Roma employment: EC EMPL/ST/2008-02: pp.22-23.

²¹ According to recent data, the poverty rates of the Roma reached 83.5 percent in Bulgaria (REF 2007), 35 percent in Hungary (REF 2007, p.9), and 56 percent in Romania in 2006 (<http://www.unicef.org/romania/overview.html>).

²² The level of dependency of Roma households on state welfare for their survival is extremely high: if pensions are included as part of state benefits, the level of dependency reaches 24 percent of households in the Czech Republic, 48 percent in Bulgaria, 55 percent in Hungary. See **UNDP Report (2004), p.4**; Roma Education Fund (2007) *Advancing Education of Roma in Bulgaria: Country Assessment and the Roma Education Fund's Strategic Directions* (Budapest: REF), p.68.

²³ Sub-standard housing signifies homes featuring a number of deficiencies such as lack of access to running water, sewage or electricity. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) (2009a) *Housing conditions of Roma and Travellers in the European Union. Comparative Report* (Brussels: FRA), p.10. According to another survey (FSG 2009, op.cit. pp.25-27), more than 30 percent of the Roma population live in shanty towns (3.6 percent) or sub-standard housing. Wide discrepancies exist between EU member states: while 92 percent of the Spanish Roma population lives in standard houses or flats, 31 percent of Roma are confined in shanty towns in Portugal. EU-wide, 22 percent on average live in neighbourhoods or areas that are distant or separated from cities. Geographical isolation is particularly acute in Bulgaria (47 percent) and Greece (54 percent).

²⁴ FSG (2009), op. cit., pp.25-27.

²⁵ Only 27 percent of respondents were aware of anti-discrimination legislation in relation to ethnicity and race (from 13 percent in Greece to 36 percent in the Czech Republic). FRA (2009b) *Housing discrimination against Roma in selected EU Member States – An analysis of EU-MIDIS data* (Brussels: FRA), p.9. However, the FRA report demonstrates that forced evictions of Roma are prevalent in all EU-member states.

²⁶ According to the FRA, 54 percent of Roma live in segregated (i.e. predominantly immigrant/minority) neighbourhoods, despite considerable variations between the member states surveyed (72 percent in Bulgaria, 66 percent in Romania, 32 percent in the Czech Republic). FRA (2009b) *Housing discrimination against Roma in selected EU Member States – An analysis of EU-MIDIS data* (Brussels: FRA), p.20.

²⁷ Presidency Conclusions, European Council, 23-24 March 2000, Lisbon. Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm

²⁸ 'Steps must be taken to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty' by 2010. Paragraph 32, *Lisbon European Council 23 and 24 March 2000 Presidency Conclusions*. Available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/lis1_en.htm.

²⁹ *Council Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin*. 29 June 2000. Available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32000L0043:en:HTML>

³⁰ The Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on Roma and Travellers was established in 1995. See http://www.coe.int/T/DG3/RomaTravellers/Default_en.asp.

³¹ See the 2003 OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma within the OSCE Area, described on ODIHR's webpage: <http://www.osce.org/odihhr/18149.html>

³² World Bank (2005) *Roma in an expanding Europe: breaking the poverty cycle* (Washington DC: World Bank). Available at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTROMA/Resources/roma_in_expanding_europe.pdf.

³³ UNDP (2006) *At Risk: Roma and the Displaced in Southern Europe* (Bratislava: UNDP). <http://hdr.undp.org/es/informes/regionalreports/europacei/name.3460.es.html>

³⁴ *Presidency Conclusions of the European Council*. 14 December 2007, Paragraph 50. Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/97669.pdf.

³⁵ European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (2008), op.cit., p.xii

³⁶ European Roma Summit agenda, Conference Report and MEMO. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=88&langId=en&eventsId=105&furtherEvents=yes>. The Second European Roma Summit will take place in Córdoba, 8 April 2010.

³⁷ These initiatives include a *Resolution of the European Parliament (31 January 2008)*, a *Commission Report on Roma social inclusion (July 2008)*, the *Conclusions of the Council of Ministers of the EU (8 December 2008)* and *Conclusions of the Council of Ministers of the EU (8 June 2009)*.

See *European Parliament resolution on a European strategy on the Roma*. P6_TA(2008)0035. 31 January 2008. Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P6-TA-2008-0035&language=EN>; *Commission Staff Working Document accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Non-discrimination and equal opportunities: A renewed commitment. Community Instruments and Policies for Roma Inclusion*. COM(2008) 420. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=88&langId=en&eventsId=105&furtherEvents=yes>; *Council Conclusions on inclusion of the Roma*. 2914th GENERAL AFFAIRS Council meeting. Brussels, 8 December 2008. 16862/08 (Presse 359). Available at: http://www.eu-un.europa.eu/articles/en/article_8359_en.htm and <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st15/st15976->



[re01.en08.pdf](#); *Council Conclusions on Inclusion of the Roma*. 2947th Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting. Luxembourg, 8 June 2009. Available at: http://www.euromanet.eu/upload/21/69/EU_Council_conclusions_on_Roma_inclusion_-_June_2009.pdf;

³⁸ Prague, 24 April 2009. *10 Common Basic Principles* annexed to Council Conclusions 8 June 2009. Available at: http://www.euromanet.eu/upload/21/69/EU_Council_conclusions_on_Roma_inclusion_-_June_2009.pdf

³⁹ *Consultation on the future "EU 2020" strategy*. Available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/secretariat_general/eu2020/consultation_en.htm

⁴⁰ José Manuel Durao Barroso, *Political Guidelines for the Next Commission* (Brussels, 3 September 2009), p.15.

⁴¹ For instance, Article 21 of the European Parliament's *Resolution on a European strategy on the Roma* "Urges the Commission and Council to align EU Roma policy with the Decade of Roma Inclusion and to make use of existing initiatives such as the Roma Education Fund, the OSCE Action Plan and the recommendations of the Council of Europe to heighten the efficacy of their efforts in this area". *European Parliament resolution on a European strategy on the Roma*. P6_TA(2008)0035. 31 January 2008. Available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P6-TA-2008-0035&language=EN>. Accessed 5 September 2009.

⁴² European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (2008), op.cit., p.xii

⁴³ The Open Method of Coordination, defined as an instrument of the Lisbon strategy, is a framework of coordination allowing member states to elaborate a common strategy, based on common objectives, measurements and benchmarking (comparison of member states' performance and exchange of best practice, monitored by the Commission). More information is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/spsi/the_process_en.htm

and http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/open_method_coordination_en.htm

⁴⁴ Prague, 24 April 2009. *10 Common Basic Principles* annexed to Council Conclusions 8 June 2009. Available at:

http://www.euromanet.eu/upload/21/69/EU_Council_conclusions_on_Roma_inclusion_-_June_2009.pdf

⁴⁵ There are currently 12 governments collaborating with the Decade: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Spain. More information on the Decade is available at: <http://www.romadecade.org/about>.

⁴⁶ More information on the Acceder programme is available at <http://www.gitanos.org/acceder/>.

⁴⁷ See Structural Funds and ESF regulations. *Regulation (EC) No. 1081/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Social Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No. 1784/1999*; *Council Regulation (EC) No. 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund and repealing Regulation (EC) No. 1260/1999*.