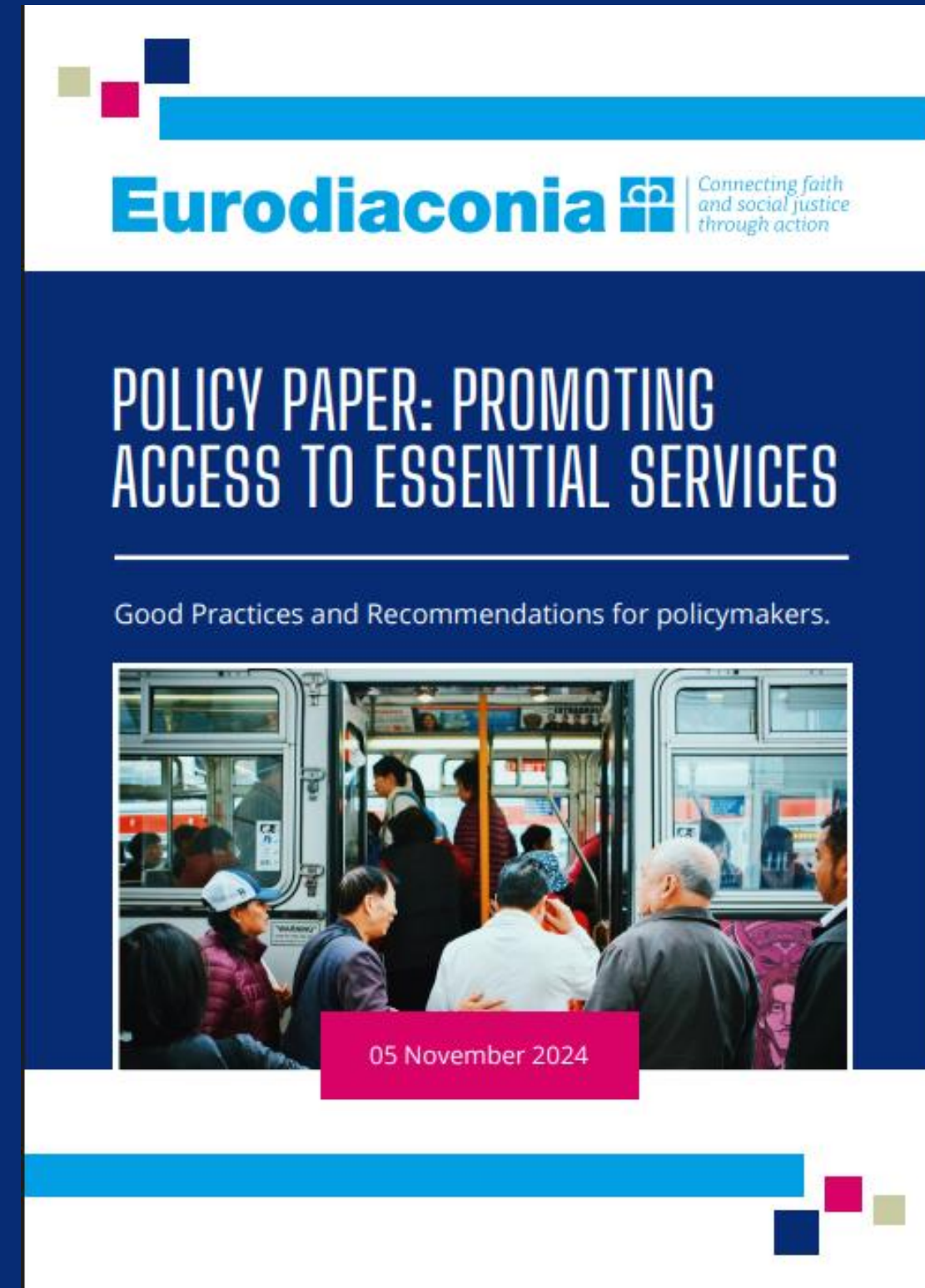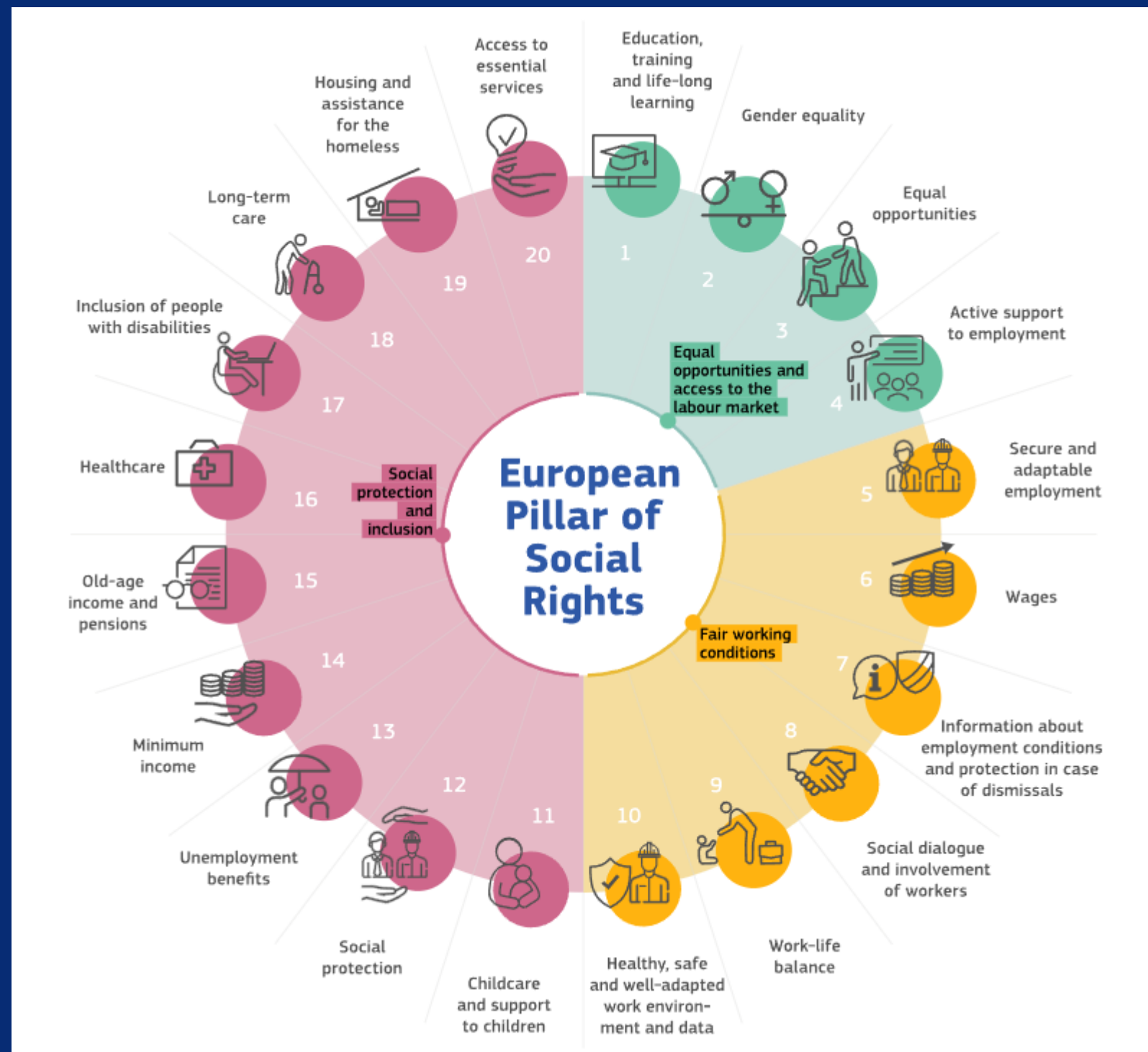# SOCIAL EUROPE ACADEMY

**PART I EURODIACONIA**
ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND TACKLING ANTI-ROMA RACISM

**PART II EU POLICY DEVELOPMENTS**
ANTI-POVERTY AND ANTI-RACISM

# Eurodiaconia's work on essential services

# What are essential services?



European Pillar of Social Rights

## Principle 20: Access to Essential Services

"Everyone has the right to access essential services of good quality, including water, sanitation, energy, transport, financial services and digital communications. Support for access to such services shall be available to those in need."
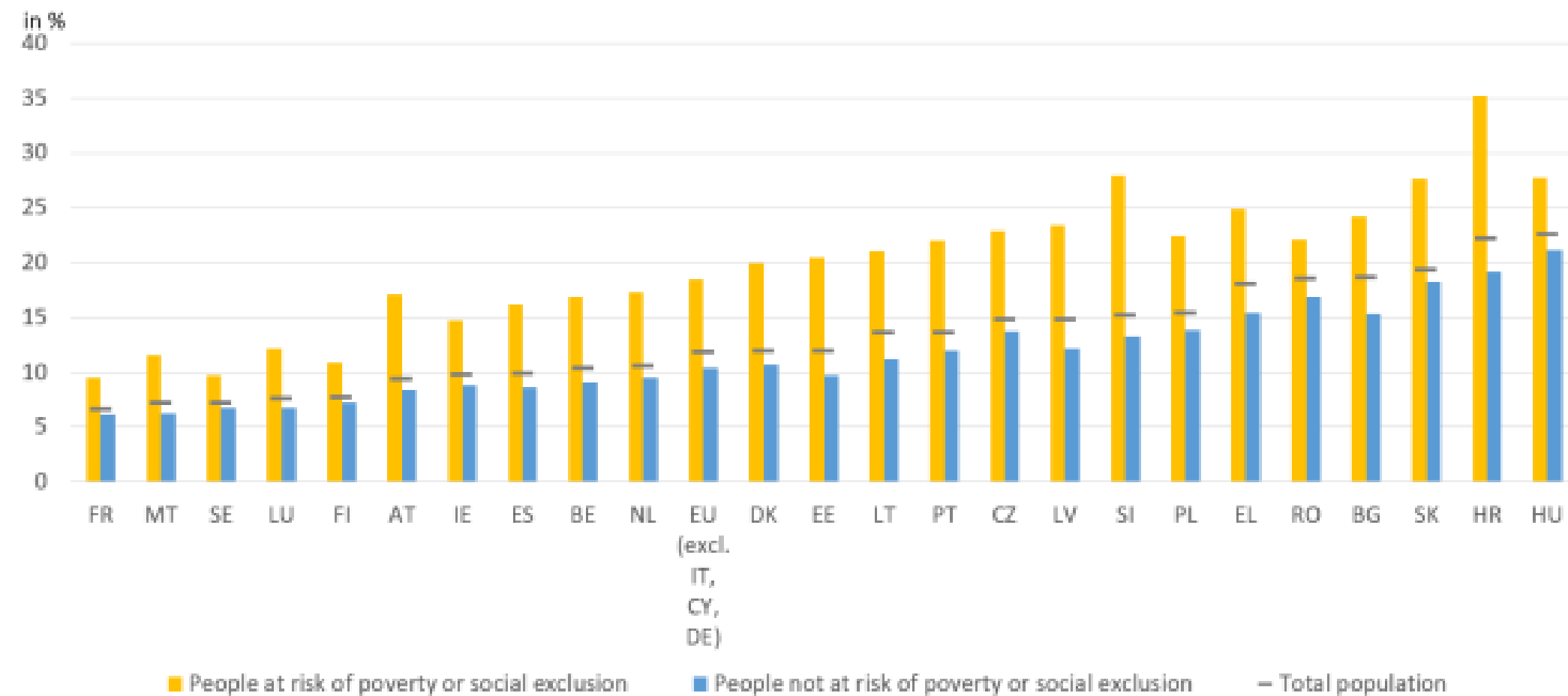
# Challenges and information

- No coherence in the definition of 'essential services'

- European Commission staff working document: focus on the affordability of essential services

- Strongly linked to 'Services of General (Economic) Interest'

- Most people in the EU have access to essential services, but it is often the most disadvantaged or most marginalised groups that lack access to these services

- Data gaps (especially regarding transport and the affordability of digital communication) and lack of disaggregated data

- Situation differs between and within the member states

# State of play



Chart 18 – Median expenditure on total of essential services across households in total population, AROPE and not AROPE, 2015 (% of disposable income)

# Barriers to accessing essential services

## *Affordability*

- **1.5%** of the EU population **lacks access to sanitation** (2020)
- **5.1%** of the EU population **at risk of poverty**

- High fees can hold people back from opening a bank account (e.g. people experiencing homelessness)
- No current data about the affordability of financial services

- EU population experiencing **energy poverty**: **9.3% in 2022**, 10.6% in 2023, 9.2% in 2024
- EU population **at risk of poverty** experiencing energy poverty: **20.2%** in 2022

- **2.4%** of EU population could **not afford regular use of public transport** (2014)
- 5.8% of those at risk of poverty

- **2.4%** of the EU population **cannot afford internet connection at home**
- **7.6%** of the EU population **at risk of poverty**

# Barriers to accessing essential services

## Availability and accessibility

- **4%** of EU population is potentially at **health risk** due to no or **limited access to good quality drinking water**
- In most EU member states, **less than 1%** of the population lives in households without a bath, shower, or flushing toilet (improvements in recent years)

- No disaggregated data on access to financial services in the EU
- **Most Europeans have access to a bank account**, only Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary have levels below 90% of the population (World Bank Data)
- People experiencing homelessness often face challenges

- 78% of EU population has subscribed to a fixed broadband at home, rates are higher in urban than in rural areas
- **The gap between rural and overall mobile network (4G) coverage narrowed**, but the gap of broadband persists

- **Remote and rural areas** are left behind, faced with a **lack of public transport**
- **Mobility challenges**, e.g. the elderly, people with disabilities, gendered aspects of mobility

# Barriers to accessing essential services

## *Lack of necessary skills*

- Level of **basic digital skills** varies significantly: 79% (Finland) – 28% (Romania)
- **Skill gap:** 54% of Europeans have basic digital skills, 87% use the internet regularly
- Certain groups have lower skill levels than others: the elderly, people living in rural areas, people with low or no formal education, people in unemployment

- 8.8% of European households are affected by over-indebtedness, low-income groups and unemployed facing higher rates

**Social exclusion and barriers to access housing, employment, social benefits, etc.**

![Eurodiaconia — Connecting faith and social justice through action]

# Essential services as enablers of social inclusion

**Gateways to access other services**
Increased access to healthcare, education, employment, housing, etc.

**Social and economic participation**

**Overall wellbeing and social inclusion**
Improving life and health, reducing poverty, enhancing social inclusion

# Eurodiaconia's recommendations

Develop a framework to measure barriers to access essential services

Address the data and knowledge gaps by ensuring EU-wide, comparable, and disaggregated data collection on all essential services

Include a focus on the availability of essential services and invest in rural areas

Strengthen and adequately fund Services of General Interest

Adequately fund social services

Foster a holistic approach to essential services in the EU's Anti-Poverty Strategy

Emphasise essential services in the mid-term review of the EPSR Action Plan
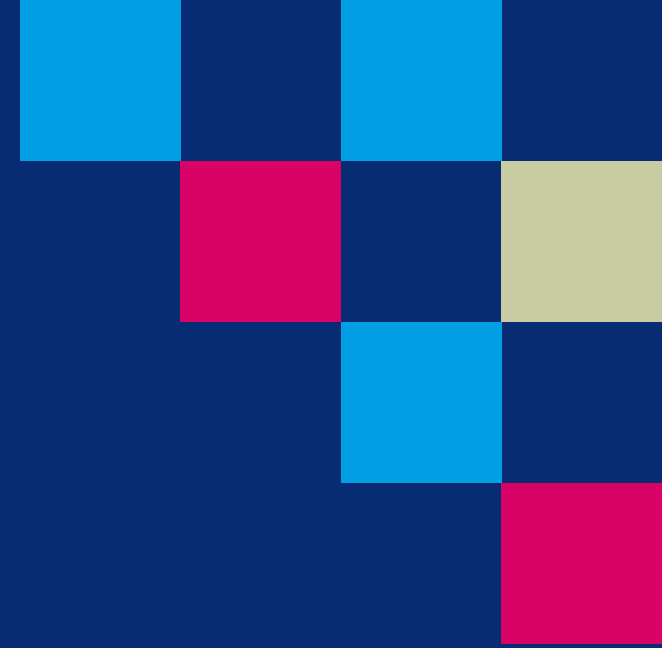
# Eurodiaconia's recommendations

**Enforce access to water and sanitation for everyone**

**Mitigate the regressive impacts of ETS2 on low-income households**

**Ensure digital access for everyone and foster digital inclusion**

**Enhance financial literacy skills and ensure access to financial services**

**Address transport poverty in the context of the green transition**

# Current developments

**EU Water Resilience Strategy**
- Access to water as a human right and public good
- Barrier to accessing water is a rather low priority

**European Commission Recommendation on Transport Poverty**
- Three dimensions of transport poverty: affordability, availability, accessibility
- Strong link to the Social Climate Fund

**Affordable Energy Plan**
- Part of the Clean Industrial Deal
- Focus on industries, not on households
- Upcoming: Citizens' Energy Package

# Eurodiaconia Guidelines on Tackling Anti-Roma Racism

- In 2024, Eurodiaconia's Roma Inclusion Network gathered in Budapest to explore **the role of non-profit social service providers in combatting Anti-Roma Racism**

- We **renovated our commitment** to fight this form of racism and updated our Guidelines to reflect current realities and approach shift
  - 14 members representing 10 different national and regional contexts

- Why these guidelines?
  - **Persistent, systemic and socially accepted**
  - Despite important initiatives at EU level, the Roma continue to experience discrimination, segregation and violence. The levels of discrimination against Roma have barely improved since 2016 (FRA 2021, Roma Survey)
  - Process of **self-reflection** where we asked ourselves: where might we hold bias as service providers?  how can we challenge stereotypes in our own services and spaces?

# Eurodiaconia

*Connecting faith and social justice through action*

**Eurodiaconia Guidelines:**

- 6 focus areas
- Actionable steps linked to our members' best practices
- Not one-size-fit all, but flexible and adaptable

**1** Changing the narrative

**2** Promoting solidarity in diversity

**3** Fostering inclusive church communities

**4** Increasing the space for Roma self-determination

**5** Raising awareness of Roma culture and Roma history

**6** Coordinating advocacy efforts

# A European Anti-Poverty Strategy



**Eurodiaconia** — Connecting faith and social justice through action

### *Announcement*

"(...) will be part of our work to help people to get access to the essential protections and services they need, along with addressing the root causes of poverty through a first-ever EU Anti-Poverty Strategy."

*Political guidelines for the next European Commission 2024-2029*

# State of play

## What we know

📄 Parliament Report

👥 European Commission Strategic Dialogue

📊 Public consultation

## What we don't know

➕ Link to European Pillar of Social Rights

⚖️ Political priority?

🔗 Link to other frameworks
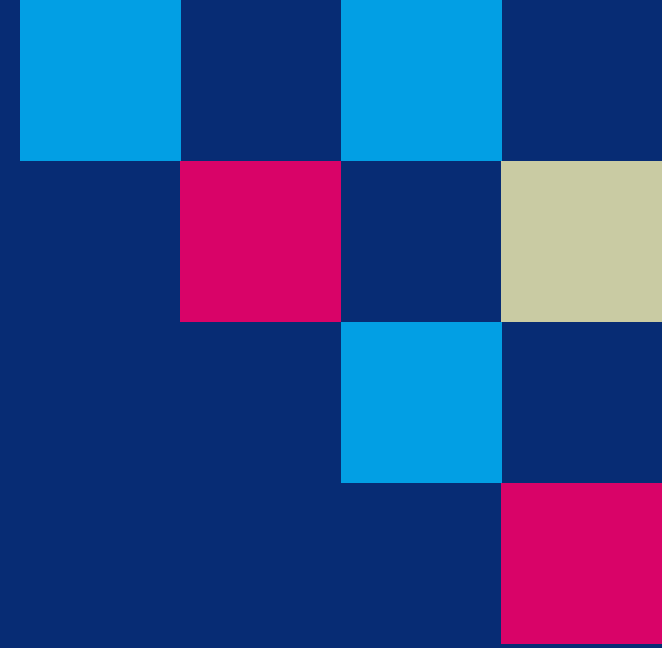
# Policy developments of the Union of Equality

# I. A new European Anti-Racism Strategy

*"You will present a **new Anti-Racism Strategy**, with the aim of ensuring that all people are able to live lives free of the barriers that racism creates. You will put forward resolute actions to address discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes"*

*"You will spearhead the **implementation of the EU Strategic Framework for Roma equality, inclusion and participation** and improve the lives of marginalised Roma communities in Europe"*

**Mission Letter to new Commissioner for Preparedness and Crisis Management, and Equality**

# Where do we come from? EU ARAP 2020-2025

## 2020 Political breakthrough

The EU's first coordinated policy to tackle racism in both its structural and individual forms. Leading to:

- Appointment of the EU Anti-Racism Coordinator (DG Justice, European Commission) and the Diversity and Inclusion Office
- Permanent Anti Racism Civil Society Forum
- National Action Plans against Racism: 12/27 MS and 5 in preparation (10 MS have implemented measures)

## Structural weaknesses

- Lack of effective monitoring tools
- Insufficient disaggregated data EU wide
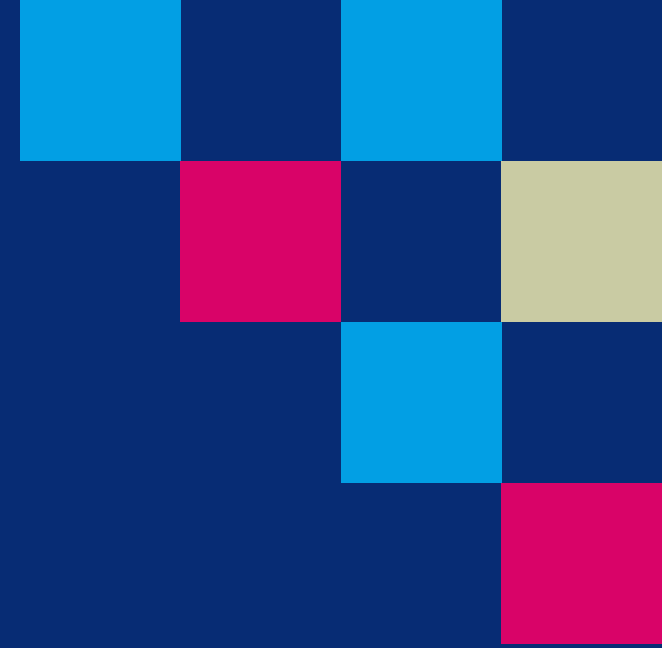- Siloed work within the EU institutions despite mainstreaming objectives

# Eurodiaconia

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# Looking ahead: 2026-2030 Anti-Racism Strategy

## Scope

- Tackle all forms of racism (incl. Anti-Black racism, Anti-Muslim hatred, anti-semitism, anti-Roma racism)
- Strengthen intersectionality
- Alignment with specific instruments (Roma Strategic Framework, Gender Equality Strategy, EPSR)
- Contextualise racism in the broader political priorities of the EU

## Key priorities (proposed)

- **Addressing structural racism**
  - Equality data
  - Mainstreaming
  - Historical legacy

- **Ensuring equal access to rights**
  - Discrimination in public services and law enforcement
  - Unconscious bias in the administration
  - AI and digital tools

- **Fighting social inequality**
  - Focus on education, jobs, housing and healthcare
  - EPSR and Anti-Poverty Strategy
  - Inclusive hiring and school curricula

- **Stronger implementation framework**

# Eurodiaconia

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## State of play

**?** Consultation period

**👥** Stakeholder meetings with CSOs (Permanent CSO Forum, May)

**📁** Open consultation (8 July)

**📚** Expected by Q4 2025

## Position

- **Monitoring** must be strengthened– clear targets, indicators and progress reviews (Roma Strategic Framework)

- **Socio-economic status** and **anti-migrant discrimination**

- **Mainstreaming** into poverty reduction, housing, education, social protection and migration must be real – outline **how**

- Legal alignment with **International Human Rights Law** – binding international obligations for the EU MS (e.g. ICERD) + accountability

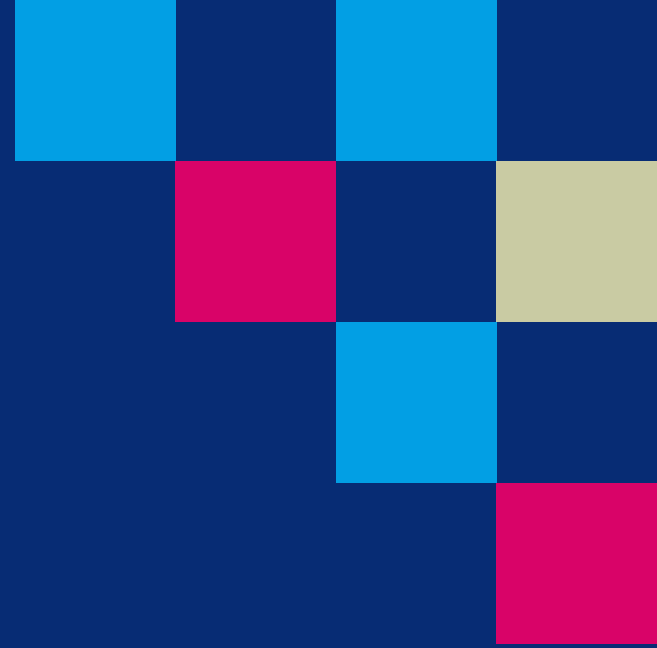# II. Roma Strategic Framework 2020-2030

2021: Development of the NRSFs

2024: EUCOM Assessment of the implementation of the NRSFs
(2024 Roma Inclusion NM, Budapest)

2023: EUCOM Assessment of the NRSFs
(2023 Roma Inclusion NM, Bratislava)

2025: Assessment of the NRSFs
(period: June 2023 – March 2025)

- Targeted to national and local NGOs
- Concrete achievements (key factors)
- Challenges encountered (suggestions for improvement)
- Promising practices (local level)

# Thank you!

## Contact

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