



Policy Paper

# Destitute EU Mobile Citizens

**Eurodiaconia** is a European network of churches and Christian NGOs providing social and healthcare services and advocating social justice.

## Mission

Eurodiaconia is a network of churches and Christian organizations that provide social and health care services and advocate for social justice. Together we work for just and transformative social change across Europe, leaving no-one behind.

## Vision

Driven by our Christian faith, our vision is of a Europe where each person is valued for their inherent God-given worth and dignity and where our societies guarantee social justice for all people, including the most vulnerable and marginalized.

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## About this publication



This paper details the challenges confronted by destitute EU mobile citizens, including the discrimination and racism (antigypsyism<sup>1</sup>) faced by Roma EU mobile citizens, outlines the efforts of social service providers to address these needs, and puts forward policy solutions and best practices to respond to current deficiencies.

Destitute EU mobile citizens are vulnerable to homelessness, destitution, and exploitation because they fall in the gaps of social protection due to a lack of harmonisation of social security systems, administrative hurdles, and inadequate assistance and information on their rights. The invisibility of EU mobile citizens has created a deficiency of information, services, and policies that has been filled by a patchwork of services provided by NGOs. These services, while necessary, are insufficient to meet the long-term needs of EU mobile citizens, which require sustainable approaches on the initiative of national and local governments backed by coherent EU policy.

Many Eurodiaconia members have developed strong programmes providing services to EU mobile citizens and have established expertise on the needs faced by destitute EU mobile citizens and current gaps in national and EU level legislation.

Eurodiaconia is a network of 54 organisations in 32 European countries, founded in the Christian faith and working in the tradition of diaconia.<sup>2</sup> Representing over 30,000 service providers, Eurodiaconia members provide social and health services and promote social justice.

This policy paper builds on our 2014 policy paper on destitute mobile EU citizens<sup>3</sup> and aims to provide updated information and recommendations

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<sup>1</sup> [Reference Paper – antigypsyism.eu](https://www.eurodiaconia.org/who-we-are/)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.eurodiaconia.org/who-we-are/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://eurodiaconia.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/policy\\_paper\\_free\\_movement.pdf](https://eurodiaconia.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/policy_paper_free_movement.pdf)

based on the experiences of our members whose services provide food and shelter, assistance to access employment, education and advice on the rights of EU citizens, and employment opportunities through social enterprises.

Within the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need to reflect on the position of EU mobile citizens, especially destitute EU mobile citizens, who were highly affected by border closures, lockdowns, and associated measures to stop the spread of the virus. Future budget cuts resulting from the pandemic will affect the social sector and groups in our society that are already vulnerable such as EU mobile citizens.

## Who are EU Mobile Citizens?



As of 2020, 3.3% of the working age population of the European Union lived in a Member State other than that of their citizenship.<sup>4</sup> This represents approximately 9.5 million people and in total, over 16 million EU citizens who have moved to another Member State to work, study, or retire.

Even mobile EU citizens who are in secure employment or able to support themselves are often politically and socially marginalised, constituting a fundamental democratic issue at the heart of the EU.<sup>5</sup> This political and social marginalisation is amplified for EU citizens who are living in poverty. The invisibility of EU mobile citizens in national and EU level policy also contributes to low-levels of understanding regarding both the rights of EU mobile citizens and the barriers faced by those living in poverty who are unable to leverage social capital in order to successfully integrate.

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<sup>4</sup> EU citizens living in another Member State - statistical overview - Statistics Explained (europa.eu)

<sup>5</sup> How to Support the Participation of Mobile EU Citizens in Local Communities | European Week of Regions and Cities (europa.eu)

Destitute EU mobile citizens live in tension between their fundamental rights as EU citizens, to move and seek opportunities in other Member States, and the unclear threat of becoming an “unreasonable burden”<sup>6</sup> on the social assistance systems of the host Member State and facing expulsion or destitution. Beyond the right to remain being conditional, different approaches have been adopted across the EU, creating uncertainty for vulnerable EU mobile citizens and leaving their futures up to arbitrary interventions and decision making.

The condition of destitute mobile EU citizens can be described as a perpetual state of precarious inclusion. Instead of being completely excluded from society, destitute EU mobile citizens engage with the welfare state, local authorities, employers, and NGOs, but are often unable to fully navigate the system and overcome barriers.

## EU Framework

The free movement of workers between EU Member States is a fundamental right guaranteed by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Articles 45 and 46) along with the free movement of goods, services and capital. It is one of the main achievements of the European integration process.

Secondary law and the case law of the Court of Justice develop and refine free movement. The most significant example of the latter is the Directive

*"Rights exist to a great extent, but not knowledge about them to the same extent, which creates a gap in which we (NGOs) act:"*

*Karin Asplund, Head of Crossroads,  
Stockholm City Mission*

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<sup>6</sup> [DIRECTIVE 2004/38/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT](#)

on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States (2004/38) which lays down the conditions in which Union citizens and their families exercise their right to move and reside freely within the Member States, the right of permanent residence as well as restrictions on these rights on grounds of public policy, public security or public health.

Currently (as of 2021), the Presidency of the Council and the Parliament revived negotiations towards an agreement on the revision of the harmonisation of social security systems in Member States after negotiations were previously halted in 2019.<sup>7</sup>

The adoption of the revision of the harmonisation of social security systems is necessary to better fulfill the social rights of EU mobile citizens. It includes topics such as the exportation of unemployment benefits from minimum 3 months to 6 months and states that workers who become unemployed after working at least 3 months can rely on previous experience in another Member State to claim unemployment benefits. These changes would allow for more time for EU mobile citizens to find work and prevent the quick deterioration of their financial status in the case of job loss.

## Key Challenges



Through a combination of our advocacy experience and the work of our members, we have identified the following key areas: **employment and labour exploitation, human trafficking, access to healthcare & social security, housing & homelessness, and antigypsyism** faced by

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-deeper-and-fairer-internal-market-with-a-strengthened-industrial-base-labour/file-jd-revision-of-regulation-on-social-security-labour-mobility-package>

**mobile Roma.** In the following sections we explain these persisting impediments and put forward solutions based on the experiences of our members.

## Employment and Labour Exploitation

The primary reason EU mobile citizens move and seek employment in other EU countries is a lack of job opportunities in their home country.<sup>8</sup> Our members in host countries report that most destitute EU mobile citizens who utilise their services were not homeless in their home country but were living on the edge of poverty with no potential for upward mobility. However, many face difficulties accessing employment in the formal economy and fall into exploitative work situations<sup>9</sup> or destitution. In the absence of assistance to access the labour market from public employment services, NGOs including Eurodiaconia members fill the gaps.

Common barriers to accessing quality employment reported by our members include discrimination and antigypsyism, language barriers, low-skills or

*“We need to think about why these people are moving - to find work and the chance to survive. When they arrive and find our societies so closed, they end up in the shadow economy - the work market is too inaccessible.”*

*Maria Kratz-Larsen, Project Leader,  
Skåne City Mission*

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<sup>8</sup> Overall, the employment rate for EU mobile citizens is higher than the EU average (73.1% vs 72.4% in 2020). However, there is a significant difference in employment rates when country of origin is taken into consideration, for example, 61.8% for mobile Bulgarians.

<sup>9</sup> Different countries have different understanding of what constitutes exploitative labour conditions and what falls under the scope of trafficking in human beings

certifications/skills that are not transferrable, and lack of formal work experience.

Our members share that administrative difficulties in the process of job-seeking are widespread. For example, in many countries you cannot register in the locality without a job, but cannot get work without an official address. This is a key issue from which many other challenges arise.

Precarious contracts (zero-hour or part-time) and overqualification for jobs is also common. For EU mobile citizens with intersectional vulnerabilities, for example, a disability or belonging to an ethnic minority, compounded discriminations make it even harder for them to find quality employment.

In some countries where our members operate, there have been concerted efforts to criminalise activities such as begging, an activity some mobile EU citizens turn to in the absence of employment opportunities and inability to receive social assistance. Our members report that these measures only further marginalise mobile EU citizens and that instead, providing assistance to access the labour market would be a more productive and sustainable solution.

Many mobile EU citizens are employed in the informal labour market, where they do not have the protection of a contract and receive less than minimum wage. Those working in the informal sector struggle to have their work experience recognised and are not able to receive unemployment and other benefits. One consequence of this is the lack of insurance and support in the case of work accidents, which are not rare in the construction sector, which leaves them unable to work.

Eurodiaconia members report that for many EU mobile citizens, the impetus for seeking assistance from NGOs or public employment services comes as a result of experiencing exploitative work conditions. Labour exploitation often takes place in sectors like the construction industry, the hotel and restaurant trades, agriculture, seasonal labour, food processing, seaport and logistics industries.

Policy solutions to enable EU mobile citizens to access the labour market must include measures to tackle administrative barriers, discrimination in hiring, upskilling and skills verification, and measures to prevent labour exploitation. Furthermore, public employment services and local authorities must be trained on the rights of mobile EU citizens and proactively provide information through campaigns and active outreach to prevent exploitation. The European Platform tackling undeclared work has some publications and initiatives on EU mobile citizens, but tends to focus more on seasonal workers. Increasing available data and awareness of the challenges faced by EU mobile citizens in undeclared work is a first step towards policy solutions.

## Human Trafficking

EU mobile citizens who come from a situation of poverty are at high risk of experiencing labour or sex trafficking.<sup>10</sup> Nearly half (49%) of all formally recognised victims of trafficking in the EU are EU citizens.<sup>11</sup> The victims encountered by Eurodiaconia's members are often from Eastern European Member States, which correlates with the most recent data published by the European Commission on the trafficking of EU citizens.<sup>12</sup>

The growing online nature of human trafficking means that many are recruited on the internet and social media with the promise of a good job in another EU country only to find themselves trapped in exorbitant debt to

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<sup>10</sup> EU law defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, including exchange or transfer of control over that person, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation

<sup>11</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/third-report-progress-made-fight-against-trafficking-human-beings\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/third-report-progress-made-fight-against-trafficking-human-beings_en)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

their traffickers, dangerous working conditions, little or no pay, and/or trafficked for sex.

Our members report that the trafficking of Roma women for sex has been a persistent issue over many years. The most comprehensive and reliable report on this specific issue was published by the European Roma Rights Centre in 2011.<sup>13</sup> Trafficking is correlated with vulnerabilities including lack of economic opportunity, which, in the case of Roma, is exacerbated by generational discrimination and antigypsyism. It is the case that victims of trafficking are often trafficked by members of the same nationality or ethnic group, a phenomenon that occurs not only within the Roma ethnic group.<sup>14</sup>

Our members have found there to be a lack of support for victims of trafficking. This is because of the high burden of proof and risk that victims incur when coming forward to be formally identified as victims of trafficking. Coupled with the underfunding of victim services, trafficking victims are left exposed and isolated, having been dislocated from their families and communities. Often, they are only provided assistance to return home, but without further structural support, victims land back in the same circumstances that made them vulnerable in the first place.

The three-pronged approach taken by the EU to combat human trafficking includes: prevention, victim assistance, and bringing traffickers to justice. All three of these elements must be stepped up with particular attention given to EU mobile citizens. Addressing the root causes of vulnerability to trafficking, providing sufficient funding and resources to assist victims of trafficking, and coordinating with relevant stakeholders across borders to apprehend traffickers must simultaneously be prioritised.

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<sup>13</sup> [breaking-the-silence-19-march-2011.pdf \(errc.org\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> [http://ecpat.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/situational\\_report\\_trafficking\\_in\\_human\\_beings-europol.pdf](http://ecpat.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/situational_report_trafficking_in_human_beings-europol.pdf)

## Access to Healthcare & Social Security

Our members stress that EU mobile citizens who do not have a job in the formal economy often lack access to social or health protection, given that economically inactive people can only obtain social security benefits once they prove that they have a genuine link with the Member State in question. Only in very specific situations (for most kinds of social assistance, after five years of residence) can EU citizens receive social assistance in the same way as nationals and no longer need to prove sufficient resources or have health insurance. If they cannot access their rights, they rely on the assistance of NGOs and charities, utilising services that are originally targeted towards undocumented migrants or homeless people, for example, to access basic material needs, accommodation, and assistance to access the labour market.

The European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), intended as travel health insurance, is sometimes the only health insurance available for mobile EU citizens even when their main place of residence is in the host country. The most significant issue with the EHIC card reported by our members is that, for countries where monthly contributions must be paid, if they are not paid, the card is not activated. Additionally, the EHIC card only covers necessary medical treatment that cannot be postponed until return to home country. Our members report that most of the people they assist do not even have access to an insurance card since their home countries require that they have a permanent address, which many of them do not have.

Eurodiaconia members are put in the position of bridging the knowledge gap between social services and clients because there is a lack of information services regarding every area that affects mobile EU citizens. Civil society becomes a hub for knowledge to an unreasonable extent and they often know more about EU citizens' rights than the public authorities.

The European Pillar of Social Rights Action plan launched a pilot project in March 2021 to explore the feasibility of introducing a European Social

Security Pass that would help improve the portability of social security rights across borders through the digital verification of citizens' social security coverage and entitlements by competent actors and institutions.<sup>15</sup> This would be a welcome introduction, given the administrative hassle many members report that their clients experience.

The ongoing political deadlock on the harmonisation of social security systems must be resolved to fulfill the social rights of EU mobile citizens and provide the time and resources necessary for them to find quality employment. Furthermore, public authorities and services must be better equipped to provide information and assistance to EU mobile citizens.

## Housing & Homelessness

Comprehensive data regarding the scale of homelessness of EU mobile citizens across the EU is unreliable due to a lack of disaggregated data. Most research is confined to local contexts and not comparable across Member States. Approaches to people experiencing homelessness vary across the EU and services available for destitute mobile EU citizens are even more varied. Even in Member States with progressive efforts to tackle homelessness, destitute mobile EU citizens are left behind. Eurodiaconia members share that access to emergency shelters is often separated by those who can show an identity number and those who cannot.

The lack of access to stable and secure housing forms part of the cycle of exclusion mobile EU citizens become trapped in, with the lack of a permanent address denying them access to services and job opportunities.

For many EU mobile citizens the thresholds of the rental market – to provide a deposit and to have a guaranteed monthly income – are too high. This is compounded by private housing markets that are often

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<sup>15</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1545&langId=en>

discriminatory and reject people with sufficient finances and a job based on foreign sounding last names. This leaves them living in precarity on the streets, using vehicles to live and sleep in, or relying on shelters. Shelters often cannot meet the demand for space and in some instances are only funded over the winter months. This uncertainty makes breaking the cycle of exclusion even harder because it is impossible to hold down regular employment without knowing where they will sleep that night, if their vehicle will be confiscated, if they can wash in the morning or if they can keep a set of clothes clean.

Incidences of evictions and expulsions, especially from encampments, have been widely documented across the EU.<sup>16</sup> Housing for mobile Roma after an eviction are often temporary and only delay a return to the streets. There are promising examples of integrating communities that have become established in encampments by providing decent housing as a first step.<sup>17</sup> These approaches are based on desegregation, instead of displacing or further isolating communities. Initiatives like these provide a foundation for people to begin thinking about the future instead of daily survival.

To prevent the homelessness and destitution of EU mobile citizens, removing barriers to access the housing market and social housing is the clear long-term solution. However, in the absence of these changes, temporary solutions for homelessness must be accessible for mobile EU citizens. Approaches based on segregation or further isolating communities should be replaced by humane and sustainable housing solutions.

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<sup>16</sup> [HOMELESS IN EUROPE MAGAZINE WINTER 2020 - ROMA EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS IN EUROPE \(feantsa.org\)](https://www.feantsa.org/en/homeless-in-europe-magazine-winter-2020-roma-experiences-of-homelessness-in-europe)

<sup>17</sup> [15 cities learn from Toulouse how to support Roma to access adequate housing – Eurocities](#)

## EU Mobile Roma

The issue of antigypsyism<sup>18</sup> has been touched upon throughout this paper and this is demonstrative of its pervasive nature. Antigypsyism practically looks like employers checking beforehand if an applicant is Roma, shelters adopting informal policies against accepting Roma people, incidences of hate crime going uninvestigated, police profiling, and attempts to racialise activities such as begging.

Police mistreatment of EU mobile Roma is an issue that has been highlighted by our membership. Historical and ongoing mistreatment has resulted in a lack of trust in police and other institutions.<sup>19</sup> Our members note the need to combat antigypsyism and racism and to tackle the underreporting of hate crime committed against Roma, and some of our members have developed projects specifically targeting this issue.<sup>20</sup>

The situation of mobile Roma ought to be positioned within the broader EU approach to Roma integration and antigypsyism, as Roma often leave their home country due to discrimination and lack of opportunities, only to face the same obstacles in a different country.<sup>21</sup> Our members also stress the need for anti-discrimination to be mainstreamed in all policy areas, particularly in areas related to EU mobile Roma and their access to services, employment, and housing. The intersectional needs of Roma also need to be considered, as they may face compounded challenges due to their disability status, gender, sexual identity, and other life circumstances.

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<sup>18</sup> [Reference Paper – antigypsyism.eu](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Your rights matter: Police stops - Fundamental Rights Survey | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights \(europa.eu\)](#)

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.skanestadsmmission.se/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Report-Gypsy-Go-home-ENGLISH-FINAL-to-be-published.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> [A Roma European Crisis Road-Map: A Holistic Answer to a Complex Problem](#)

## Experiences of our Members



Eurodiaconia members provide a wide variety of services to help EU mobile citizens access basic services, housing, training and education, and support to access the labour market. In the sections below we outline their best practices, main challenges they face, and policy recommendations.

### Projects and best practice

Eurodiaconia member **Diakonisches Werk Berlin-Brandenburg (DWBO)**<sup>22</sup> works extensively providing practical support for mobile EU citizens, does regional level advocacy on the topic, and collaborates with Diakonie Germany to do national level advocacy.

In the past years there have been both improvements and worsening of the condition of mobile EU citizens in Berlin. One improvement is the transition of services to go beyond provision of necessities like food and emergency accommodation to focus on social counselling and advice centres to assist people in accessing their rights.

The challenge for mobile EU citizens is accessing these rights due to administrative hurdles. Ineffective public employment services for mobile EU citizens, the absence of active outreach to EU mobile citizens who are exploited in the informal labour market or who are trafficked, and the vicious

*"Mobility is not the poverty trap, exclusion and lack of access to social rights is the poverty trap."*

*Petra Schwaiger, Policy Officer,  
Diakonisches Werk Berlin-  
Brandenburg*

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.diakonie-portal.de/>

cycle of requiring registration to receive support and needing an address to be registered are some common barriers their clients face.

While social rights are in theory available, they are not practically accessible to mobile EU citizens in Germany. The full realisation of these rights and combatting discrimination are topics that Diakonie Berlin-Brandenburg advocates for.

Eurodiaconia's member in Norway, **Kirkens Bymisjon (Church City Mission)**<sup>23</sup> have a department dedicated to assisting destitute EU mobile citizens. Their services include a soup kitchen, night shelter, and counselling services and empowerment workshops. Their clients are

*"It is our responsibility, as people with power, to address discrimination directly, to not only educate people on their rights in seeking employment, but to discuss with employers, why are none of your employees Roma?"*

*Maren Stinessen, Social Consultant/Sociologist, Kirkens Bymisjon Norway*

comprised of two main categories: one group are job seekers with some education and formal work experience who live at or below the poverty line, the other group are those that would like to work but lack formal training and experience, (with up to 90% of them illiterate), the majority of this group being Roma from Romania.

The City Mission is very engaged with the topic of antigypsyism and see it as their role, as those in positions of power and privilege, to address this topic with local and national authorities, employers, and the broader society. They have a project called "Romano kher"<sup>24</sup> that is a Roma

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<sup>23</sup> <https://kirkensbymisjon.no/arbeidsfelt/fattigdomstiltak/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://kirkensbymisjon.no/romano-kher/>

cultural and resource centre that seeks to spread awareness of Roma culture and history in Norway.

They also have the goal of politically empowering the Roma EU mobile citizens they work with, holding workshops about their rights and how they can speak up to their own local authorities or representatives when these rights are not fulfilled.

**The Salvation Army** in Poland<sup>25</sup> has witnessed high numbers of people returning to Poland after having experienced exploitative work circumstances abroad.

Responding to this, The Salvation Army started a job verification service. Jobseekers are encouraged to send adverts to the service, and experts will check the job offer according to the offer verification model developed by The Salvation Army and present the results. If a job has been verified, directly before departure The Salvation Army provides jobseekers with the necessary knowledge about taking up a job in other countries, warning signs to watch for, and helpful contacts in the host country. After departure, The Salvation Army remains in touch with the jobseeker and contacts the employer if necessary.

This best practice example has the potential of being implemented in other countries with high levels of jobseekers looking for jobs abroad because it is low cost, can be carried out remotely, and can prevent many situations of exploitation or trafficking.

Many of our members, including **The Salvation Army**<sup>26</sup> work in countries with high numbers of people who have moved to other EU Member States. Parents spend long periods of time away from their children because they are unable to bring their children with them, and their children are left with little support and at risk of early school leaving or falling into the hands of

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.armia-zbawienia.pl/przeciw-niewolnictwu.html>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.salvationarmy.org/ihq/europe>

traffickers. For our members working in eastern Europe, programmes to keep children in school and out of the streets have the potential of ending the cycle of poverty, but often struggle with sustainable financing and are not implemented by local or national government.

Our member **Stockholm City Mission** has a department called **Crossroads**<sup>27</sup> that provides social services for EU mobile citizens. In Malmö, our member **Skåne Stadmission (Skåne City Mission)** has been actively working with mobile EU citizens since late 2014 when they opened their **Crossroads**<sup>28</sup> centre. Stockholm City Mission was contracted by the municipality to provide these services for the last five years, and they are one of the largest providers of services to this target group in the city. Skåne City Mission runs Crossroads in cooperation with the municipality.

Crossroads provides language and skills training to access the labour market, run social enterprises, and employ lawyers to address associated legal issues related to their clients' access to or exploitation in the labour market on the municipal and national level. Staff report that discrimination is a major issue in mobile EU citizens ability to access the labour market and that growing xenophobia is a threat to social rights.

In addition to providing services, Crossroads in Malmo works with other organisations and local authorities in the city on trafficking, entrapment and hate crime. The centre also provides access to a nurse and healthcare. In collaboration with other local actors, Crossroads supports the running of night shelters and in extreme weather has opened as a temporary shelter. They have also developed several projects to create employment opportunities<sup>29</sup> and respond to hate crime<sup>30</sup> targeting EU mobile Roma.

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.stadsmissionen.se/vad-vi-gor/migration-och-integration/crossroads-rad-och-stod-eu-medborgare>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.skanestadmission.se/verksamheter/crossroads-malmo/>

<sup>29</sup> [EU-migranter som resurs - Skåne Stadmission \(skanestadmission.se\)](https://www.skanestadmission.se/eu-migranter-som-resurs-skane-stadsmission)

<sup>30</sup> [Motverka antiziganism mot romska EU-migranter i Malmö - Skåne Stadmission \(skanestadmission.se\)](https://www.skanestadmission.se/motverka-antiziganism-mot-romska-eu-migranter-i-malmo-skane-stadsmission)

Many EU mobile citizens and migrants are employed in the informal labour market and face high levels of exploitation or trafficking, a phenomenon that reportedly increased during COVID. Another side effect of the pandemic was the worsening destitution of EU mobile citizens who were already living in poverty and even less access to services. Because of this, many mobile EU citizens left the country and Crossroads supported local social services to meet the demand for return travel. This was the response of local government, which at the time was concerned that local healthcare systems could not cope with an outbreak within this community. However, in April 2020, many people began to return as the lockdown conditions, especially in Romania, made survival harder than life in Sweden had been. This was representative of similar experiences reported in other Western European cities.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> [Cities discuss the impact of COVID-19 on Roma inclusion – Eurocities](#)

# Recommendations



Below we outline policy recommendations addressed to the European Union Institutions and Member States based on the input of our members to improve the socio-economic status and inclusion of destitute EU mobile citizens. It is crucial for the European Union to take a coordinative role in these measures to ensure that Member States work together in the best interest of all EU citizens.

## Employment & Exploitation

1. The European Commission should expand possibilities to use EU funds to develop/support vocational training/education in sectors where mobile EU citizens seek employment and where there is established demand (construction, tertiary sector jobs, agriculture)
2. The European Commission should establish automatic recognition of qualifications and invest in improved recognition of informal skills and work experience to reduce the incidence of over-skilled EU mobile citizens in low skilled jobs
3. The European Commission should take strong preventative measures to protect mobile EU citizens from exploitation and trafficking through addressing the culture of impunity of traffickers, criminalising the knowing use of services of trafficking victims, and cracking down on false advertising online
4. Member States should improve access to rights for victims of trafficking by providing adequate funding, specialised services, and long-term assistance to re-enter the labour market

## Social, Political, & Fundamental Rights

1. The European Parliament and the Council of the EU should adopt the Commission's proposal on the revision of the EU legislation on social security coordination including the extension from 3 to 6 months of the exportation of unemployment benefits and that workers who become unemployed after working at least 3 months can rely on previous experience in another Member State to claim unemployment benefits
2. Ensure that EU mobile citizens have full access to European and international social and fundamental rights based on the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which includes the right to work, to housing, to health, to social assistance and services of general interest by monitoring fundamental rights abuses and enforcing compliance
3. Member States should increase access to social rights through the dissemination of information in all EU languages, access to legal redress, and training of social services/public services on the needs and rights of EU mobile citizens, including information on and access to national bodies promoting equal treatment and supporting workers in the European Union and their family members<sup>32</sup>
4. Member States and EU institutions should work to increase the political participation of mobile citizens in municipal and EU elections through targeted communication campaigns and promote the positive effects of intra-EU mobility
5. The European Commission should prioritise the introduction of the European social security pass and other measures to decrease administrative barriers for EU mobile citizens

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<sup>32</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1277&langId=en>

6. European Institutions should discourage punitive initiatives and programmes that attempt to discourage or prevent people from migrating which make people more vulnerable to abuses such as trafficking and criminality. In line with this, Member States should respect safeguards against expulsions (no automatic expulsions, collective expulsions, or expulsions with economic purposes, etc.), in line with the legal framework of free movement
7. The European Commission should consider lowering the requirements to obtain a European Health Insurance Card, including having a registered address, and widen the allowances for EU mobile citizens to healthcare beyond emergency/medically necessary interventions
8. Member states should tackle homelessness through the Housing First method and include EU mobile citizens in these and other initiatives and should prioritise assisting EU mobile citizens to access employment, affordable housing, and other support to prevent or exit homelessness

## Discrimination & Antigypsyism

1. Member States should tackle discrimination and antigypsyism against mobile EU citizens through the full implementation of the anti-racism action plan and mainstreaming anti-discrimination in all policy areas
2. EU institutions should expand protection from discrimination beyond the EU Employment Equality Directive to guard against discrimination based on a person's sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation in all areas of life

## Funding

1. EU funds for destitute citizens (FEAD) should be expanded to include services beyond food aid to include accommodation and integration and labour market inclusion services
2. The EU Commission should consider dedicating a portion of European Social Fund (ESF) to integration and assistance to access employment for mobile EU citizens
3. The EU Commission should support research into the profiles and public service needs of EU mobile citizens, specifically on homelessness, to inform evidence-based policy making and decrease the invisibility of destitute EU mobile citizens



\* Photo Credit: Stockholm City Mission

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

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