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European Commission Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion and participation 2020-2030

Briefing for Members

What is the Roma Strategic Framework?

On October 7th 2020, the European Commission launched a new [EU Roma Framework for 2020-2030](#), building on the previous EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies up to 2020¹. The title change from “Framework for Roma Integration” to “Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation” is crucial, as it implies that the responsibility no longer rests solely with the Roma who are called upon to “integrate”. Instead, the responsibility now lies with the Member States, which must remove the barriers preventing Roma inclusion and participation. For the first time, the Framework recognizes that the plight of the Roma cannot change without addressing antigypsyism and the prejudices of the majority population.²

The Framework, in form of a Commission’s Communication, is a non-binding instrument which is nevertheless meant to affect policy developments and practice of the Member States of the EU. Furthermore, the new Framework was endorsed by all Western Balkan countries at a ministerial meeting in Tirana at the end of October 2020. The new Framework is a direct contribution to implementing the EU Action Plan against racism 2020-2025³, the European Pillar of Social Rights⁴ and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Together with the Communication, the Commission adopted a proposal for a Council Recommendation. Following the proposal, in March 2021 the [Council’s Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation](#) was finally adopted. As many of the policy areas identified in the new Framework are predominantly the competence of the Member States, the Recommendation sets out a list of specific measures to be taken by Member States to achieve the EU objectives.⁵ A Council Recommendation is a non-binding legal instrument, which nevertheless aims at stimulating national policy initiatives.

Main actions

The new Framework sets seven objectives at the EU level, which are reflected also in the Council’s Recommendation. Three objectives are horizontal in the areas of equality, inclusion, and participation. The other four are sectoral objectives in the areas of education, employment, housing, and health. To measure

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52010DC0133&from=EN>

² Intervention of the Office of the High commissioner for Human Rights for the launch of the strategic EU Roma Framework for equality, Inclusion and Participation, 12 October 2020.

<https://europe.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=2587&LangID=E>.

³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025_en

⁴ In particular, principles 1 (quality and inclusive education), 3 (equal opportunities) and 20 (access to essential services), https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights_en.

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1813

progress, the Commission proposed for the first time a set of quantitative headline targets to monitor achievements towards the objectives by 2030.

A welcome addition to the framework is the inclusion of EU mobile Roma, a topic that was not mentioned in the previous strategy.

The objectives and the targets can be summarised as follows:

1. **Fight and prevent antigypsyism and discrimination:** cut the proportion of Roma with discrimination experience by at least half by 2030, which means less than 13% of Roma, and decrease the proportion of general population who feel uncomfortable having Roma neighbours by at least a third.
2. **Reduce poverty and social exclusion to close the socio-economic gap between Roma and the general population:** cut by at least half the poverty gap between Roma and general population and the one between Roma children and other children.
3. **Promote participation through empowerment, cooperation, and trust:** foster the participation of Roma NGOs and the participation of Roma in political life and double the proportion of Roma who file a report when they experience discrimination.
4. **Increase effective equal access to quality inclusive mainstream education:** cut the gap in early childhood education and care by at least half, reduce the gap in upper secondary completion by at least one third, and cut at least in half the proportion of Roma children attending segregated primary schools.
5. **Increase effective equal access to quality and sustainable employment:** cut by at least half the employment gap, the gender employment gap for Roma and the gap of people neither in employment nor in education and training.
6. **Improve Roma health and increase effective equal access to quality healthcare and social services:** cut the life expectancy gap by at least half.
7. **Increase effective equal access to adequate desegregated housing and essential services:** reduce gap in housing deprivation by at least one third, cut the gap in overcrowding by at least half, ensure that at least 95% of Roma have access to tap water.

Eurodiaconia welcomes these objectives and acknowledges that they reflect the main issues faced and reported by our members in the last years, particularly in the field of education and educational segregation. Nevertheless, the minimum progress to be achieved by 2030 and targets are not ambitious enough and seem to legitimize the social exclusion of too many Roma until 2030 and beyond. The Commission's Communication states that the long-term aim remains to ensure effective equality and to close the gap between Roma and the general population. In order to reach this goal, Member States ought to set more ambitious targets. Eurodiaconia members are therefore encouraged to engage in national level advocacy to not only achieve these goals, but to also consider setting more ambitious targets.

What are the National Roma Strategies?

Acknowledging the need to increase commitment and accountability at national level, the Commission invites Member States to develop, adopt and implement so-called national Roma strategic frameworks. The national frameworks should contain some common features, such as the fight against discrimination and antigypsyism, the promotion of participation and trust building; and some minimum commitments, such as national baselines and targets based on comprehensive needs-assessments. Furthermore, the national frameworks should provide additional national efforts depending on the size of the Roma population and the wider economic context. Member States with large Roma populations should foresee more ambitious

commitments, in particular making full use of the European Social Fund+ for 2021-2027 (ESF+)⁶, ensuring that the available funding effectively reaches the Roma, and collecting disaggregated data. Finally, the framework calls for the role of the National Roma Contact Points to be strengthened.⁷

The new framework recognises that there are differences between countries, so while the same topics are to be prioritised in each country, the level of expectation is different.⁸ The framework also has a focus on the local dimension and encourages Member States to involve local authorities in the design implementation, monitoring, and review of national frameworks.

The national frameworks should be submitted by September 2021.

What is the role of Eurodiaconia members?

In January 2021 Eurodiaconia published a first assessment⁹ of the new Framework, including some recommendations for national governments on the different sectoral priorities. In June 2021 Eurodiaconia organized a public panel entitled “No Child Left Behind: Digital Poverty and Roma Child Poverty in the Child Guarantee and Beyond”¹⁰, where we stressed the need for more synergies between the Roma Framework and other instruments such as the Child Guarantee¹¹. Furthermore, given the new challenges of the pandemic, we published an initial examination of the National Recovery and Resilience Plans and highlighted that the inclusion of Roma in the plans is not satisfactory¹².

We recommend that our members engage, where possible, in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the national Roma strategies in their countries and ensure that they reflect not only the objectives set by the new Framework, but also necessary additional efforts. If possible, members are encouraged to engage with their National Roma Contact Points.¹³ Beyond targeted policies, there is also a need to mainstream Roma inclusion into all policy areas, including the recovery from COVID-19, and the green and digital transition.

Funding has been made available to implement the Framework, and members are encouraged to apply for and utilize this funding where relevant. Most of the funding under the ESF+ (€98.5 billion) will be allocated under shared management within the Member States; the shared management entails that the Commission

⁶ The European (ESF+) specifically calls on Member States and the Commission to ensure equality and non-discrimination in the implementation of EU programmes. It also refers to the promotion of the socio-economic integration of third-country nationals and the inclusion of the marginalized communities such as the Roma.

⁷ Since the 2011-2020 period, a network of National Roma Contact Points (NRCP) was created, allowing exchange of information and experience among Member States at the European level.

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-eu/roma-inclusion-eu-country_en

⁹ Eurodiaconia’s assessment of the EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation, January 2021, https://www.eurodiaconia.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Eurodiaconia-Assessment-of-EU-Roma-Strategic-Framework_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁰ The report of the Joint Roma and Extreme Destitution Network Meeting, including the abovementioned public panel is available on Eurodiaconia’s website, <https://www.eurodiaconia.org/it/2021/07/joint-roma-and-extreme-destitution-network-meeting-report/>

¹¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9968&furtherNews=yes#navItem-1>.

¹² Eurodiaconia called on the Commission to include in their comments on national recovery and resilience plans requests to target Roma and their inclusion in access to employment, ending educational segregation, access to healthcare, access to social and basic services, and adequate housing, <https://www.eurodiaconia.org/it/2021/05/national-recovery-and-resilience-plans-where-are-the-roma/>

¹³ The list of NRCPs is available at the Commission’s website: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-eu/roma-inclusion-eu-country_en

does not provide direct funding for projects, but the Member States and regions are responsible for the implementation of ESF+ funding. Therefore, ESF+ funding will be assigned to the Managing Authorities in each country, which will dedicate the money to projects that are run by a range of public and private organizations, thereby responding to the country and region-specific needs.¹⁴

¹⁴ More information about the Managing Authorities in the different Member States can be found at <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=45&langId=en>