Resolution on the situation of Roma people living in settlements in the EU

2022/2662(RSP) - 05/10/2022 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 486 votes to 109, with 38 abstentions, a resolution on the situation of Roma people living in settlements in the EU.

Roma people are Europe's largest ethnic minority and an unacceptably high number of these people in Europe live in poverty and are socially excluded, enduring extremely precarious, unsafe and overcrowded living conditions in segregated rural and urban areas. The 6 million Roma people residing in the EU represent a significant and growing part of its population and have enormous potential, which it will only be possible to realise if their employment and social inclusion situations are improved.

Need for action at national level

Parliament deplored the fact that there are still people in the EU without access to safe and decent housing, clean drinking water, electricity, sanitation, sewage and waste treatment facilities, education, employment, healthcare and care services. It stressed that Roma people living in settlements should have access to decent housing that is accessible, affordable and environmentally safe.

Concerned about the substantial gap between the declarations and commitments on a strong social Europe and the reality of the situation on the ground, the Commission and the Member States are called on to urgently address the situation of Roma people living in settlements in a comprehensive and effective manner, with appropriate **short- and long-term policies supported by sufficient EU and national funding**, in order to ensure Roma in the EU and neighbouring countries are not left behind.

Education

There is a significant gap in preschool attendance between Roma and non-Roma children. Therefore, measures should be adopted to promote and facilitate pre-schooling for Roma children. Member States are called on to guarantee effective and **free access to kindergartens** for all Roma children living in settlements to ensure their participation, in line with the European Child Guarantee. They should also ensure that EU emergency funds allocated for tackling COVID-19, such as those provided under the Recovery and Resilience Facility, specifically reflect the needs of Roma and vulnerable children and ensure quality, affordable services in Roma communities, including through specific indicators in the national recovery and resilience plans.

Health and environment

Parliament is alarmed by higher infant mortality rates in Roma populations compared to non-Roma populations, especially of those living in settlements. Therefore, it called on Member States to urgently take action to ensure that children in Roma settlements are supported by healthcare professionals from birth and start treatment if necessary, as well as to recognise psychological or physical abuse of children, with an obligation to notify the competent authorities of all such cases.

Employment and social inclusion

Given the high rates of long-term unemployment in Roma settlements, the resolution called on Member States to support quality and sustainable job creation, the regularisation of informal work and accessible

bridges to employment for Roma workers such as public employment schemes, which can be a temporary solution for unemployment and an opportunity to requalify and do further training.

Member States are called on to ensure proper involvement of **social-legal protection** bodies in children and social guardianship cases in marginalised Roma settlements to ensure that children receive the protection and care necessary for their wellbeing and development, while respecting their best interests.

Deploring the high rate of forced begging among Roma children, Member States should put in place legislation that protects children and **bans forced begging**.

Use of EU and national funding

Parliament is concerned that in some Member States, the **use of resources earmarked for Roma people has been low** thus far, risking a significant loss of financial resources by the end of the current programming period. It regretted that current systems and conditions set for drawing down ESIF in a number of Member States do not allow for their smooth and efficient absorption, often owing to **bureaucratic and structural barriers** in national systems. They called for the need to reduce administrative burden, promote the use of simplified cost options and provide further assistance and flexibility, including direct distribution of funds to regional and local policies and civil society programmes to make it easier for managing authorities and beneficiaries responding to the immediate needs of Roma people living in settlements in the EU to use them.

The Member States and the Commission are called on to urgently **increase funding for the European Child Guarantee** with a dedicated budget of at least **EUR 20 billion** in order to combat the poverty that is affecting children and their families and to contribute to the goal of reducing poverty by at least 15 million by 2030 – including at least 5 million children across all the Member States.

Member States should urgently make full use of available funding instruments and resources at both national and EU level to create favourable conditions for the sustainable funding and implementation of continuous programmes and projects in an efficient, integrated, coordinated and flexible way and eliminate any obstacles, including direct and indirect forms of discrimination, that hinder the absorption of funding, in particular the ESF+, the European Regional Development Fund and the Recovery and Resilience Facility;

Need for action at EU level

Parliament noted that current practices in some Member States regarding Roma people living in settlements show evaluation of projects based on quantitative outputs alone is insufficient and can even be misleading as to the reality on the ground, as it means there is no information on the quality of projects' progress. Consequently, this could lead to decisions that pose a threat to the sound financial management of the EU budget. Therefore, it called for a **swift application of the general regime of conditionality** for the protection of the EU budget in relation to the relevant Member States.

The Commission is urged to:

- establish an early warning mechanism for reporting **risks of abuse or misuse of ESIF and other EU funds** earmarked for addressing the situation of Roma people in marginalised settlements;

- tackle **anti-Gypsyism** in all areas of society through effective legislative and policy measures;

- step up its efforts to gradually eradicate marginalised Roma settlements across the EU by launching an EU action plan to eradicate Roma settlements by 2030, with the aim of reinforcing the use of existing policy and financial instruments.