

CONTRIBUTION

Ensuring that future EU Anti-Poverty Strategy contributes to addressing the situation of poverty faced by Roma

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The European Network on Roma Equality under EU Funds (EURoma Network) has been working since 2007 to foster an increased and effective use of European Cohesion Policy Funds (notably ESF/ESF+ and ERDF) to advance the social inclusion, equal opportunities and fight against discrimination of Roma people across the EU, through mutual learning, generation of knowledge and awareness-raising activities. To this end, the Network brings together public authorities responsible for Roma policies (i.e. National Roma Contact Points) and those in charge of European Cohesion Policy Funds from 15 EU Member States, as well as the European Commission. The Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG), which is responsible for the Network's Technical Secretariat, leads and coordinates the Network. For further information: www.euromanet.eu

This document outlines EURoma Network's contribution to the European Commission's call for evidence and public consultation on the upcoming European Anti-Poverty Strategy. It seeks to contribute to ensuring that the new Strategy explicitly recognises and effectively addresses the widespread poverty and social exclusion affecting a significant proportion of the estimated 12 million Roma living within the European Union.

1. Introduction

The EURoma Network welcomes the European Commission's commitment -announced in President Ursula von der Leyen's political guidelines- to release the first-ever European Anti-Poverty Strategy. This initiative represents a significant step towards the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the achievement of the EU 2030 poverty reduction target. The Strategy is expected to serve as a comprehensive reference framework and to offer evidence-based guidance to support Member States in undertaking concrete and impactful actions.

EURoma also welcomes the Strategy's adoption of a multidimensional approach, which goes beyond facilitating access to essential protection and services to also tackle the root causes of poverty, and aims to look at the social, political, and economic dimensions.

This Strategy is much needed. Notwithstanding the existence of established policy, legal, and financial frameworks, progress to date has been limited and insufficient to achieve the defined poverty reduction targets. Consequently, **it is imperative to intensify current efforts and to develop new, efficient instruments that operate in synergy with existing ones. The forthcoming Anti-Poverty Strategy holds significant potential for positive impact in the years ahead, provided that its multidimensional approach is effectively implemented to rebuild and strengthen the European social model.**

To effectively achieve its overarching objective of reducing poverty across the EU, **the forthcoming EU Strategy must explicitly and specifically address the distinct disadvantages faced by certain groups - such as Roma- who are disproportionately represented across all poverty and deprivation indicators.** Recent data¹ reveals a deeply concerning situation, particularly for children, with conditions not only stagnating but, in some Member States, deteriorating further.

In this context, EURoma Network submits a series of proposals on key elements to be considered in the forthcoming EU Anti-Poverty Strategy with the aim of ensuring that it effectively responds to the specific situation of poverty and deprivation disproportionately affecting Roma. The contribution places particular emphasis on the essential role of EU funding instruments – in particular the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) - in supporting the achievement of the goals of the Strategy. These proposals are based on the insights gathered through internal Network discussions and are grounded in the practical experience of its partners, who are directly involved in the management of Roma-related policies and of ESF+ and ERDF resources.

2. Why should the future EU Anti-Poverty Strategy take fully into account the specific situation of Roma?

2.1. The persistent situation of poverty affecting the Roma population

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)'s 2024 Roma survey findings² provide relevant information on the severe (and in many cases chronic) levels of poverty and deprivation faced by Roma, including a large number of children, and the significant disparities compared to the general population:

- On average **70% of Roma and Traveller communities in the Member States surveyed are at risk of poverty.** While this rate has declined in all countries, the gap with the general population is still large (54 percentage points at the EU level, compared with a baseline of 63 percentage points). In most countries, **the exposure to the risk of poverty is lower in neighbourhoods where only some or no other inhabitants are Roma/Travellers.**

¹ See recently released European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)'s survey on Roma and Travellers (2025) "Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European Countries- Perspectives from the Roma Survey 2024" https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2025-roma-survey-2024_en.pdf and section '2.1. The persistent situation of poverty affecting the Roma population' in this document.

² FRA surveys considered include:

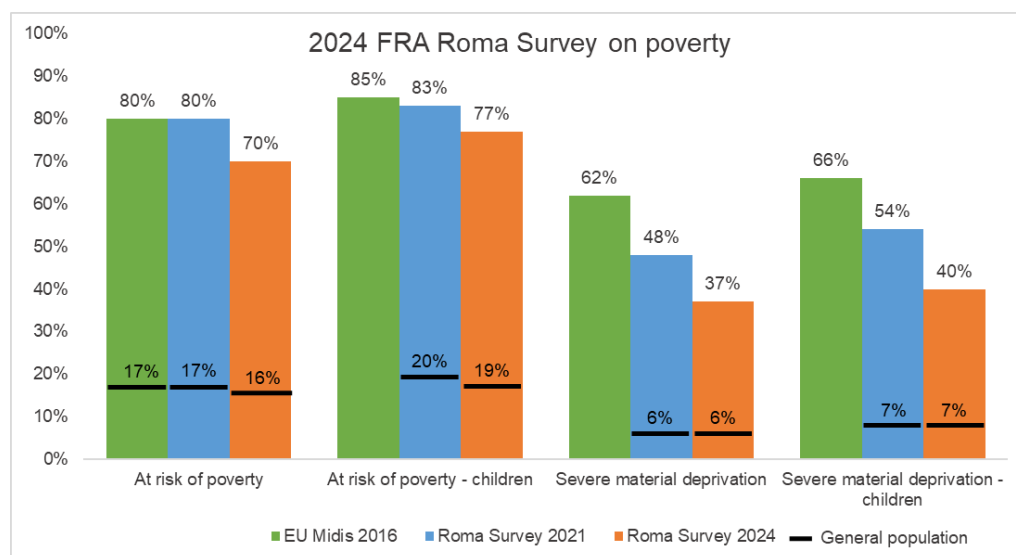
- Second EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey Roma (EU-MIDIS II) (2016) <https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/second-european-union-minorities-and-discrimination-survey-roma-selected-findings> Covers 9 EU Member States: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Spain.
- Selected findings Roma and Travellers Survey 2019 <https://fra.europa.eu/en/project/2018/roma-and-travellers-survey-2018-2019>. Covers 6 EU Member States (Belgium, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom).
- Roma and Travellers in six countries (2020) https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2020-roma-travellers-six-countries_en.pdf
- Roma in 10 European Countries-Roma Survey 2021 <https://fra.europa.eu/en/project/2020/roma-survey-2020-2021>. Covers 8 EU Member States (Croatia, Czechia, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania and Spain) and 2 accession countries (North Macedonia and Serbia).
- FRA survey on Roma and Travellers (2025) "Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European Countries- Perspectives from the Roma Survey 2024" https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2025-roma-survey-2024_en.pdf. Covers 10 EU Member States (Bulgaria, Czechia, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania and Spain) and three accession countries (Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia), touching upon the same areas of life as the previous Roma Survey 2021.

- **Children are particularly affected. 77% of Roma and Traveller children aged under 18 lived in households at risk of poverty.** Although there are improvements compared to 2021 and 2016 rates, the improvement is slightly smaller than that for the overall Roma population and disparities persist, especially in areas with high concentrations of Roma population. As observed for the overall Roma/Traveller population, the percentage of children at risk of poverty tends to be smaller in neighbourhoods with a low concentration of Roma/Travellers.

Forty per cent of Roma/Traveller children lived in a household that could not afford to pay for at least four of the nine items in the severe material deprivation index. The rates in the countries surveyed have generally decreased or stayed the same since 2016. Despite the improvement, gaps in comparison with 2020 data for the general population are still high. Disaggregation does not reveal major gender differences, although it shows that younger Roma children (aged 15 and under) are considerably more vulnerable to material deprivation than older children.

- While **severe material deprivation** has decreased, on average, **37% of Roma and Travellers surveyed lived in households facing severe material deprivation in 2024, including 40% of Roma children**, it still remains significantly higher than among the general population. Vulnerability is greatest among the youngest and oldest age groups, with no major differences observed between men and women.

Severe material deprivation directly correlates with extreme vulnerable housing situations such as slums or segregated settlements where many European Roma live, including a high percentage of children.



European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2025, *Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European countries – Perspectives from the Roma Survey 2024* <https://fra.europa.eu/en/project/2024/roma-survey-2024>

According to FRA's data there is a positive trend across all indicators, with particularly significant progress in the area of severe material deprivation. This indicator has improved by 11 percentage points among Roma adults and by 14 percentage points among Roma children. Since 2021, the proportion of Roma individuals at risk of poverty has decreased by 10 percentage points, while the rate among Roma children has declined more modestly - by only 6 percentage points.

It is important to highlight that the improvement observed in poverty-related indicators for the Roma population exceeds that of the general population. As a result, the gap between both groups has narrowed, although not as fast as foreseen and it remains significant.

2.2. The need to step up efforts to comply with existing policy frameworks and targets regarding poverty

While there are different policy instruments that could contribute to addressing the poverty faced by Roma, progress has been limited, or there have even been setbacks. Therefore, an increased commitment and further efforts are needed to comply with these instruments and to achieve the set goals, which if the current pace continues, will not be achieved.

The **EU Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020 - 2030**³ stresses that *'Tackling multigenerational poverty and exclusion is crucial to improving the situation of marginalised Roma'*. In this context, it provides guidelines for the consideration of the fight against multigenerational poverty (with a child protection focus and better use of EU Funds) in the planning and implementation of National Roma Strategic Frameworks.

One of the horizontal objectives set for the period up to 2030 is to 'reduce poverty and social exclusion', which includes a number of EU headline indicators to be achieved in relation to:

- At-risk-of poverty rate (below 60% of median equivalised income after social transfers);
- Children < 18 at-risk-of poverty;
- Share of people living in a household in severe material deprivation (cannot afford 4 out of 9 items, e.g., food, inviting friends, etc.);
- Children < 18 living in severe material deprivation.

It also establishes EU-level targets on minimum progress to be achieved by 2030:

- **Cut poverty gap between Roma and the general population by at least half** to ensure the majority of Roma escape poverty. Progress will be measured based on 2020 available data, where at risk of poverty rate of Roma accounted for 80%, the rate of general population for 16.8% (gap 63.2 pps). According to FRA's 2024 data, the rate of Roma at risk of poverty is 70% (gap 54 pps).
- **Cut poverty gap between Roma children and other children by at least half** to ensure that by 2030 the majority of Roma children escape poverty. Progress will be measured based on 2020 available data, where at risk of poverty rate of Roma Children accounted for 85%, the rate of general population for 19.6% (gap 65.4 pps). According to FRA's 2024 data, the rate of Roma children at risk of poverty is 77% (gap 58 pps).

As the data shows, despite some progress in narrowing the inequality gap between Roma and non-Roma across Europe, progress toward key targets has been slower than expected. This suggests that, without significantly intensified efforts, it is unlikely the targets will be met by 2030. The upcoming EU Anti-Poverty Strategy can play a crucial role in accelerating this progress.

³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0620&qid=1759123089061>

More broadly, despite the **establishment of an EU-level headline target on poverty reduction within the European Pillar of Social Rights**⁴- which calls for a reduction of at least 15 million in the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion and 5 million children- slight improvements have been achieved, and the overall numbers remain alarmingly high for certain population groups, particularly children. The first Social Pillar Action Plan, launched in 2021, fell short of achieving meaningful change, including for Roma. We therefore trust that the second Social Pillar Action Plan, currently under development, will contribute to the full implementation of the 20 social rights principles and the 14 indicators outlined in the Social Scoreboard. It should also deliver more robust and tangible outcomes in the social domain, including with regard to the protection and promotion of the social rights of Roma.

As regards the **EU Funds**, the Commission's proposals for the Common Provisions, the ESF+, the ERDF, and the EAFRD regulations request the fulfilment throughout the 2021-2027 period of the thematic enabling condition on the existence of a national strategic policy framework for social inclusion and poverty reduction.

The **European Child Guarantee** represents a key milestone in the European Union's ongoing efforts to combat child poverty and social exclusion, with a particular focus on children in need -including Roma children, who have been explicitly identified as a priority target group requiring dedicated attention. By guaranteeing access to five essential services -free early childhood education and care, free education (including school-based activities and at least one nutritious meal per school day), free healthcare, healthy nutrition, and adequate housing -the initiative aims to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and social exclusion. If effectively implemented, it holds the potential to generate long-term, positive outcomes for the estimated 20 million children in the EU who are at risk of poverty or social exclusion, among whom Roma children are disproportionately represented. Furthermore, as outlined in the Council Recommendation establishing the Child Guarantee, EU funding instruments are expected to play a central role in supporting its implementation. The ESF+ contribution is particularly relevant with the 5% allocation to combat child poverty in the Member States with rates of child poverty and social exclusion above the EU average of 23.4% (based on data from 2017 to 2019) and the 3% to material deprivation. It is also envisaged that the ERDF contributes to the implementation of the Child Guarantee by supporting long-term and integrated investments (either independently or in combination with the ESF+).

However, despite formal commitments, the availability of resources, and the explicit recognition of Roma children as a target group requiring particular attention, these measures do not appear to be sufficient to ensure the mobilisation of adequate resources to effectively address their specific situation. A recent assessment carried out on how Roma children are considered in the implementation of the European Child Guarantee in the 15 Member States involved in the EURoma Network, based on the analysis of the implementation reports submitted by countries⁵ raises serious concerns about the extent to which Roma children are benefiting from the measures and investments under the European Child Guarantee. The findings call into question whether the Child Guarantee is achieving its objective of addressing the extreme poverty and exclusion experienced by Roma children across the EU, and of ensuring that no

⁴ European Pillar of Social Rights: https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/european-pillar-social-rights-building-fairer-and-more-inclusive-european-union_en; First Action Plan: https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/european-pillar-social-rights-building-fairer-and-more-inclusive-european-union/european-pillar-social-rights-action-plan_en

⁵ See report 'The European Child Guarantee and Roma Children: Between Commitment and Practice – A Review of the Biennial Reports', jointly elaborated by the EURoma Network and Eurochild. <https://www.euromanet.eu/news/euroma-and-eurochild-joint-report-on-the-consideration-of-roma-children-in-child-guarantee-implementation/>

child is left behind. From a funding perspective, it also remains unclear whether EU Funds - particularly ESF+ and ERDF- are being used to their full potential. There is limited evidence as to whether these funds are mobilising additional financial resources or being effectively combined with national and regional funding to support comprehensive and targeted interventions. Only through the implementation of both targeted interventions and mainstream measures that explicitly include specific actions to ensure outreach and adapted approaches to the needs of disadvantaged Roma children can the overall goal of reducing child poverty in Europe be truly achieved.

The **forthcoming first-ever European Affordable Housing Plan** represents a key opportunity to catalyse investment aimed at reversing extreme housing exclusion, which continues to affect a significant proportion of the European Roma population, including Roma children. This sectoral policy instrument should explicitly recognise and prioritise these severe forms of housing deprivation as a core target for future interventions. Doing so requires the mobilisation of EU, national, regional, local, and private resources in a coordinated and strategic manner. Placing a strong focus on addressing the most deprived and marginalised housing conditions -where Roma are disproportionately represented- constitutes a critical policy investment for the effective reduction of poverty and social exclusion in the EU.

In the current context of limited success of existing policies and financial tools in achieving the set targets related to the reduction of poverty rates of Roma (including those of Roma children), there is an urgent need to reinforce efforts and create new, efficient tools that act in synergy with existing ones.

3. Proposals for the future European Anti-Poverty Strategy

EURoma Network puts forward the following proposals for the future European Anti-Poverty Strategy to contribute to addressing the situation of poverty and deprivation faced by Roma:

1. **Explicit acknowledgment and consideration of the situation of poverty and deprivation faced by Roma**
2. **Enhance the combination of the efficient social protection schemes and socio-economic and educational activation measures as essential elements in the fight against poverty**
3. **Boost the use of EU Funds to tackle the situation of poverty of Roma**
4. **An effective monitoring system**
5. **Strengthen governance mechanisms to improve coordination and cooperation between relevant stakeholders**
6. **Promote mutual learning and exchange among relevant stakeholders**

1. Explicit acknowledgment and consideration of the situation of poverty and deprivation faced by Roma

The extent of poverty and deprivation affecting Roma population -including children -is deeply concerning, with levels of inequality compared to the general population remaining unacceptably high. Given this reality, it is **essential that the European Anti-Poverty Strategy explicitly recognises and addresses the specific situation of Roma**. Only by doing so can the Strategy effectively contribute - both through targeted and mainstream measures- to reducing the persistent disparities and advancing real progress in the fight against poverty and social exclusion.

Explicit, but not exclusive mention to Roma, is a necessary (although not sufficient) condition for acknowledging and raising awareness of their specific situation, as well as for ensuring that there is a more targeted focus and action. It signals public authorities (at national, regional and local levels) and other stakeholders the need to focus on them and helps guide/focus actions and investments (whether targeted or mainstream) and make them more focused and effective towards the promotion of social change, real equality and non-discrimination of Roma in the EU. In addition, it is proved that when Roma are not explicitly named and considered -instead being assumed to be included in broader interventions/investments targeting disadvantaged or marginalised groups - they become invisible and therefore, often overlooked.

This explicit recognition and approach should be incorporated across all dimensions of the Strategy, with due consideration given to the Roma population:

- As a **priority target group of the Strategy**, given their situation of deprivation and poverty (as it currently the case within the European Child Guarantee).
- In the **description of measures and guidelines for action**. It is equally important to establish targeted measures as it is to ensure that, across all proposed actions, safeguards and specific provisions are incorporated to guarantee that Roma are effectively reached.
- In the **monitoring and evaluation system**, through the inclusion of indicators and other monitoring mechanisms that make it possible to determine whether the interventions have effectively reached Roma individuals.

In all of these aspects, the Roma population should not be regarded as a homogeneous group. It is essential to **take into account the specific characteristics of the various subgroups or segments**, which require particular attention- **such as children, young people, and women**. A special focus should be placed on the **situation of Roma children**, in order to effectively address the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

This approach should be applied at the level of the Member States and, in line with the distribution of competences in each country, should also be **extended, where appropriate, to regional and local authorities**.

2. Enhance the combination of the efficient social protection schemes and socio-economic and educational activation measures as essential elements in the fight against poverty

Although the situation varies from country to country and even from region to region, experience has already revealed certain factors that contribute to the greater success of measures to combat poverty among the Roma population. Identifying these factors and stepping up efforts in this sense (with the necessary improvements and adjustments) is key to making progress in the global fight against poverty.

Based on experience, a key factor of success is the combination of the promotion of a robust social protection system (as part of the guarantee of Welfare State) **with employment and educational activation measures.**

Improved social protection schemes

It is essential to have income guarantee systems, such as the Minimum Income Benefits, and to ensure that these benefits have adequate coverage and amounts and pay special attention to those groups in situations of particular vulnerability and with higher rates of severe poverty, such as the Roma population. Such schemes, which vary greatly among Member States, need to be revised and improved to become truly effective and efficient policies in achieving their main mission: to combat poverty now and to prevent it in the future. The same should apply to benefits targeting children support schemes and benefits.

The following recommendations aim for the minimum income schemes to be a truly effective and efficient instrument to combat poverty now and to prevent it in the future:

- **To enhance coverage rates and reduce non-take-up** by addressing two key challenges: the lack of awareness about the benefit among many of those who could be eligible for it (especially among those with a greater degree of social exclusion) and the lack of knowledge on how to apply among others.
- **To increase the impact of the minimum income schemes in the reduction of poverty** by ensuring benefits meet families' real needs involves adjusting payment amounts. It also means preventing adverse effects from administrative processes (like suspensions due to required changes) and boosting efficiency through improved database interoperability. These measures tailor support more precisely to family circumstances, reducing vulnerabilities and ensuring timely, adequate assistance. This approach enhances fairness and responsiveness in social benefit systems.

Social protection together with activation measures

Social protection schemes should be combined with **activation measures**.

Employment as crucial element

Promoting targeted measures to increase job market participation among persons in situations of poverty and exclusion, such as Roma, is crucial. Supporting them through tailored policies—like education, training, mentoring, job counselling, career guidance, and incentives—can simplify access to

employment and career progression. Furthermore, implementing specific measures for marginalised women, especially Roma women who face layered discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, and social status, is essential to ensure equitable opportunities and inclusion in the labour market.

These activation measures are not only a question of fairness but they will also contribute to addressing the current (and future) labour force shortages with the untapped potential of these groups and have an economic return (the lack of dependency on non-work-related income, increased consumer spending and a broader tax base as these persons get into the labour market, among others).

However, it should be noted that, while measures to promote and support access to the labour market (and the access to quality jobs) are important, it should be recognised that **there are certain subgroups within the target group that cannot be expected to enter the labour market as a priority** because their circumstances are such that access to the labour market can be limited. Strengthening social skills, motivation, and self-sufficiency in these cases is fundamental to achieving effective social inclusion.

Education, a key for overcoming poverty

Education is a crucial element in ending the severe and persistent poverty of the Roma population and breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty. Achieving equitable and inclusive education that guarantees access and continuity for children and young people in situations of greater vulnerability and poverty, including Roma, is key to ensuring that in the future they have the same opportunities as their peers and can escape the poverty in which their families find themselves. It is therefore essential to take action in this field by considering specific measures and investments in the education field targeting children and youngsters in situations of greater vulnerability and poverty, such as Roma children, and their families, along with taking fully into account these groups in mainstream measures in the education field.

Measures could include implementing specific, integrated, and long-term actions to prevent school failure and dropout among these students, thereby reducing the gap with the rest of the student population; providing families—especially those in severe poverty—with resources and support to accompany their children’s educational paths; and ensuring guidance, social accompaniment, and motivation for students in severe poverty to access vocational training. These efforts should also promote access to quality early education and preschool from an early age, and address inequalities in educational opportunities between urban and excluded Roma localities. Outreach initiatives and information and awareness campaigns should be developed to reach these children, young people, and their families. Ensuring the presence of qualified and motivated teachers, strengthening inclusive education, and actively preventing segregation in schools are also crucial. Special attention should continue to be paid to Roma girls and women, who face multiple forms of discrimination linked to their gender and ethnicity.

Other elements that should be taken into account to tackle Roma poverty

- **The close link between extreme vulnerability and housing exclusion of Roma and poverty.** Extreme vulnerability in terms of access to and maintenance of decent, adequate and sustainable housing reflects and has a direct impact on the poverty of the Roma population, as it hinders their access to fundamental rights such as education, employment and health, perpetuating their

poverty. This is particularly alarming in the most deprived and excluded housing situations that still exist in the EU today, including substandard and segregated housing, such as slums and settlements.

- **The consideration of discrimination based on race or ethnicity** as a cross-cutting challenge faced by certain groups such as the Roma population. This discrimination directly impacts their access to fundamental rights such as employment, education, housing or health and therefore perpetuates their situation of poverty and exclusion. Specific actions are therefore required in this field, in compliance with existing EU and national frameworks to combat discrimination and racism (see EURoma Network's contribution 'How Could the Future EU Anti-Racism Strategy Contribute to Combatting Antigypsyism and Discrimination against Roma?'⁶).
- **The need to take into account the needs of the groups at higher risk of vulnerability and poverty** such as Roma when developing policies across all areas, including **policies and initiatives related to the green and digital transition**, with a view to addressing the potential risks this transformation could bring for them, while taking advantage of the opportunities it could also offer for them. Possible actions may be related to promoting a fair green and digital transition; countering energy/transport poverty; development of green and digital skills; promoting employability related to green and digital jobs (including entrepreneurship); providing support to innovative job-to-job or labour market transitions; uptake and use of green or digital innovations, etc.

While there may be some challenges for the implementation of actions related to these new elements in certain contexts, such as those of extreme poverty, it is possible (with the required adaptations) and advisable as they do offer opportunities to improve the living conditions and equal opportunities of persons living there. Examples of types of initiatives include employment programmes providing training for low qualified profiles of new green jobs; housing restoration, including clean energy facilities (solar panels, isolation panels, etc.), or digital tools for Roma children, etc.

3. Boost the use of EU Funds to tackle the situation of poverty of Roma

The alignment of the objectives of the European Anti-Poverty Strategy and the current (2021-2027) and the future (2028-2034) Multiannual Financial Frameworks (MFF) is crucial to promote the use of the full potential of the EU Funds in achieving the objectives of the Strategy.

EU Funds, in particular ESF+, in complementarity with ERDF, have proved to be essential instruments to reduce socio-economic and territorial disparities and inequalities and to promote a more social and inclusive Europe (in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights and EU values) by providing support to the groups/people in situations of greater exclusion and vulnerability such as the Roma. As ESF+ has showed, they allow for specific, tailored and sustained investments benefiting these groups in areas such as fight against poverty (including child poverty) and discrimination, employment (including youth employment), education and skills, access to housing and essential services, promotion of equality (including gender equality) or by supporting the capacity of civil society organisations. They can also play

⁶ <https://www.euromanet.eu/news/euroma-contributes-to-the-future-eu-anti-racism-strategy-with-proposals-to-combat-antigypsyism-and-discrimination-against-roma/>

a key role at the policy level, by making it possible to implement and test interventions related to public policies that had not been developed before, and by prompting policy changes.

In this sense, increased **efforts should be done to take full advantage of the potential of ESF+ and ERDF, both in the 2021-2027 and the 2028-2034 programming periods by for example:**

- **Ensuring the effective and efficient implementation of the measures planned for the 2021-2027 programming period** with an impact on the situation of the most vulnerable and poorest people, and ensuring that they actually benefit them. This is particularly relevant with regard to mainstream measures, which, in order to be inclusive of this group, would require the establishment of certain safeguards, positive actions, or adaptations to ensure they can benefit from programmed measures.

Likewise, compliance with the **thematic enabling condition on the National Strategic Policy Framework for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction**.

- Guaranteeing the **alignment between the type of measures and the elements considered key in the fight against poverty and the actions eligible for funding within ESF+ and ERDF**. Further degree of flexibility in terms of eligibility would be desirable. This should also apply to reporting systems.
- **Increasing the full potential of existing instruments, such as the Child Guarantee to tackle Roma children poverty**. The outcomes of the assessment carried out by EURoma Network and Eurochild on the biennial reports of the implementation of the Child Guarantee⁷ seem to suggest that the potential of EU funds for targeted and efficient investment in Roma children remains largely untapped. Greater use of both the ESF+ and the under-utilised ERDF could significantly support - through long-term and integrated investments (either independently or in combination of both funds)- the reduction and prevention of poverty and exclusion among Roma children and their families, and help to break the intergenerational transmission of poverty among Roma children⁸.

This is particularly relevant for the ERDF, which could contribute by ensuring equal access to inclusive and quality education in order to reduce the existing gap between Roma children and their non-Roma peers; socio-economic integration of marginalised communities, including Roma and children with a migrant background; equal access to healthcare, in particular primary care services; transition from institutional to family and community-based care; investment in housing for low-income households, people with special needs and vulnerable groups...

This underuse of the ERDF could be applied to the fight against poverty and social aspects in general. An increased contribution of the ERDF in the promotion of the equality and non-discrimination of the groups in situations of vulnerability and poverty in areas such as education,

⁷ For more information on the outcomes and on recommendations, see report 'The European Child Guarantee and Roma Children: Between Commitment and Practice – A Review of the Biennial Reports', jointly elaborated by the EURoma Network and Eurochild. <https://www.euromanet.eu/news/euroma-and-eurochild-joint-report-on-the-consideration-of-roma-children-in-child-guarantee-implementation/>

⁸ EURoma Reference Document on the Child Guarantee provides detailed information on the options for using the ESF+ and the ERDF to support the Child Guarantee <https://www.euromanet.eu/publications/euroma-reference-document-how-to-guarantee-that-the-european-child-guarantee-efficiently-tackles-roma-childrens-poverty-and-inequality-gap-2/>

housing and access to services...and in addressing the territorial disparities affecting these groups, particularly where extreme poverty and deprivation exists, such as in the cases of most extreme cases of substandard and deprived housing such as slums and settlements. Combining these investments with investments linked to the ESF+ could ensure a greater impact in the fight against poverty by guaranteeing comprehensive interventions combining investments in soft and hard measures.

- Taking full advantage of the **possibilities offered by the ESF+ and ERDF to address the most severe situations of housing vulnerability and exclusion, including substandard and segregated housing, such as settlements**, which are directly linked and contribute to perpetuate the situation of poverty faced by certain groups, such as Roma. As concerns the 2021-2027 programming period, the recently adopted amendments to the ERDF and Cohesion Fund Regulation should be seen as an opportunity as they recognise 'affordable and sustainable housing' as a challenge and introduce it as a Specific Objective under several Policy Objectives. As regards the 2028-2034 programming period, while, given the persistent situation of inequality, there is a need to maintain comprehensive support (both through soft and hard investments) in the current areas of support (employment -including youth employment-), education and training, health, housing and essential services or fight against discrimination and poverty), support in the area of housing should be reinforced. The European Affordable Housing Plan currently being drafted would also offer an ideal framework to contribute, through a comprehensive strategy, to giving a greater push to this challenge.
- **Taking fully into account the elements that are considered relevant when considering the use of the EU Funds**, building upon the experience from previous programming periods related to the funding of interventions addressing the groups in situation of vulnerability and poverty such as Roma:
 - The importance of a **comprehensive mapping of the situation**, serving as the basis for identifying and prioritising needs, defining appropriate actions, aligning them with available funding sources, and establishing mechanisms for effective monitoring and evaluation.
 - The **reinforcement of low-performed targets of the existing policy framework** at national (National Roma Strategic Framework) or regional levels.
 - The **long-term and large-scale perspective of the interventions as a key criterion to reduce poverty** (in terms of dimension/budget) to allow for timeframes and economic resources adequate to the needs and the objectives to be achieved. Effectively tackling the structural and persistent situation of poverty experienced by Roma (and its root causes) require complex and comprehensive/integrated approaches with long-term perspective and commitments (in contrast to short-term and limited interventions). Enough time is needed not only for implementation, but also for planning, consultation, engaging stakeholders, and promoting coordination, building trust with communities, elaborating and implementing individualised and integrated plans, monitoring, evaluation and policy review, etc.
 - The **cooperation between the bodies in charge of the policy framework** (National Roma Contact Points) **and those managing the funds**.
 - The **adoption of integrated approaches** that address all factors influencing the fight against poverty and deprivation is essential, including not only social protection but also areas such

as employment and education. To achieve this, a **combination of soft investments** (e.g., social support and accompaniment) **and hard investments** (e.g., infrastructure and equipment) is necessary. Accordingly, the **complementary use of the ESF+ and ERDF** plays a crucial role in ensuring effective and holistic interventions.

- The **explicit consideration of the situations and/or groups at risk of vulnerability and poverty in the funding cycle**, from the planning and the design of the calls to the monitoring and evaluation. This is essential to ensure that they are targeted. This is particularly important in the housing field as in many cases interventions are considered and implemented following mainstream/territorial approaches, focusing on territorial units (at local, regional or national levels).
- The consideration of **mechanisms that allow for renewing and giving continuity to pilot and/or short-term actions that prove their value and success**, allowing for their consolidation/extension/scaling up during the same programming period (or beyond, when relevant).

The next Multiannual Financial Framework provides a valuable opportunity to consider the lessons learned from the current programming period and apply them to the next one in order to ensure that the fight against poverty and the explicit consideration of groups at higher risk of poverty and deprivation such as Roma are embedded in the funding instruments.

- The use of **approaches that have proved relevant** in interventions related to groups in situations of vulnerability and poverty in general, including:
 - The **use of dual-approach strategies**, designing explicit but not exclusive actions focused on the target population, which are aimed at standardising and promoting access to ordinary resources and services, building a bridge between the needs of the Roma and the mainstream services they are entitled to use or benefit from.
 - The combination of direct and indirect interventions understood as:
 - Direct interventions targeting the target group.
 - Indirect interventions targeting the context in which the actions take place, including policy, legislative and institutional frameworks or actions to contribute to transforming the predominant narratives, combatting stereotypes and promoting a realistic, diverse and current image of the Roma population, as well as to encourage mutual understanding and coexistence).

4. An effective monitoring system

It is important to have a system of monitoring and evaluation in place (including general or impact-based quantitative indicators) allowing to monitor progress, effectiveness and efficiency as well as impact of the defined measures and targets, as well as to check whether they reach the target group. Elements that could contribute to an effective monitoring system include:

- Include ad hoc, rigorous **studies** targeting groups that are particularly affected by poverty and are not included in official statistics, in line with the Council Recommendation establishing the European Child Guarantee, which calls for measures to be targeted at specific categories of children in need, for quantitative and qualitative objectives to be achieved, and for the progress of

implementation to be monitored, including its results and impact on children in need, among whom are Roma children.

- As regards the **indicators**, review and incorporate the indicators that have been included in the strategies and plans referenced in the policy frameworks and reference initiatives, and consider the inclusion of the following indicators:
 - Indicators aimed at groups that are particularly vulnerable to poverty, such as Roma. And within that, the subgroups, within the areas covered.
 - Indicators linked to education and childhood, such as rates of reduction in school dropout and failure.
 - Indicators relating to people living in substandard housing, including slums and settlements.
- As regards the **collection of data on ethnic origin**, it is worth reminding that it is possible if the necessary safeguards are respected. In addition, there are different options that are being used by countries to overcome potential challenges as regards data collection included the establishment of adequate processes or the involvement of specialised CSOs in the implementation of the measures as they normally have a better reporting capacity. EU Funds also allow to determine the indicators on informed estimates provided by the beneficiary.

5. Strengthen governance mechanisms to improve coordination and cooperation between relevant stakeholders

The **synergy of the future European Anti-Poverty Strategy with the objectives and targets of existing EU policy instruments and initiatives** (EU Strategic Framework for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation, EU Anti-Racism Strategy, EU Child Guarantee, Climate Social Fund and other measures related to green and energy efficiency) **and with future strategies and plans** (new EU Anti-Racism Strategy, new Action Plan of the European Pillar on Social Rights, new European Affordable Housing Plan...) is essential to ensure complementarity and reinforcement of these instruments, by contributing to reinforcing their compliance and complementing them with the proposal of additional measures, ensuring a more integrated and effective support. Integrating the fight against poverty into EU policy frameworks and ensuring its effective implementation in national sectoral policies is essential for making progress.

The same applies to the **alignment with the upcoming Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)** to ensure the alignment between the policy measures and the financial resources.

To this end, it is essential to promote a **stronger and more effective governance mechanisms for coordination and cooperation between the bodies coordinating the European Anti-Poverty Strategy** (and the related policies at national and regional levels) and:

- The bodies in charge of the relevant policies and initiatives. To ensure the alignment with the EU Strategic Framework for Roma Equality and ensure that Roma are reached, the regular, meaningful and formal dialogue and coordination processes should be maintained with the bodies/departments in charge of this instrument (including European Commission representatives and National Roma Contact Points).

- The authorities in charge of ESF+ and ERDF in order to ensure alignment with EU Funds (i.e., inter-funds committees) and make their best possible use.
- The bodies in charge of the Child Poverty, as a crucial instrument to address child poverty and exclusion.
- Other relevant actors in the fight against poverty. The involvement of specialised stakeholders close to the ground and to the target group (whether public authorities or civil society organisations (CSOs) is particularly relevant as it allows for a better outreach to the target group (particularly relevant for vulnerable groups such as Roma) and better voicing and addressing their needs.

These should happen in all phases of the Strategy, including the design, implementation and monitoring of the Strategy (starting from the definition of objectives, targets, measures and impact indicators).

6. Promote of mutual learning and exchange among relevant stakeholders

Exchange and mutual learning have proved crucial to learn from each other and support the development and sharing of innovative approaches and methodological tools (including pilot projects).

The European Commission could **facilitate mutual learning and the exchange of practices between Member States**.

The **EURoma Network** will continue playing its role as platform for transnational engagement of partners in mutual learning and the exchange of relevant elements to be considered and positive experiences as regards the fight against poverty, as well as on how the use of EU funds can play a critical role in this endeavour.

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