



Conclusions of the 18th European Platform for Roma Inclusion

*“Insights and lessons after five years of implementing the EU Roma Strategic Framework –
Progress made and remaining challenges”*

Introduction

The 18th European Platform for Roma Inclusion (EPRI)¹ took place five years after the adoption of the EU Roma Strategic Framework² and at the midpoint of its implementation. Held following the completion of the 2023–2025 reporting cycle on the implementation of national Roma strategic frameworks and prior to the adoption of the European Commission’s 2026 report on implementation, the Platform took stock of the progress achieved and identified the key challenges to ensure that the EU collectively meets the objectives of the EU Roma Strategic Framework by 2030. The discussions built on the previous editions of EPRI, broadening the perspective to encompass all seven objectives of the EU Roma Strategic Framework.

In this context, the 18th EPRI brought together all relevant actors: political decision-makers at EU, national, regional, and local levels; managing authorities of EU funds; and representatives of Roma and pro-Roma civil society. The Platform addressed the theme “Insights and lessons after five years of implementing the EU Roma Strategic Framework – Progress made and remaining challenges”, with the aim of highlighting persisting issues, exploring concrete solutions, and contributing to making the EU and national Roma policies more effective in achieving the 2030 targets.

Opening remarks

In her opening remarks, **Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management Hadja Lahbib** reaffirmed the EU’s commitment to Roma equality, highlighting achievements such as the strengthening of some national contact points and new directives empowering equality bodies, while calling for greater ambition and accountability in tackling persistent gaps in employment, health, housing, and education. She stressed that EU funding must translate into tangible results on the ground and announced

¹ European Roma Platforms & Summits: https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-eu/european-roma-platform-roma-summits_en.

² EU Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion and participation: https://commission.europa.eu/publications/new-eu-roma-strategic-framework-equality-inclusion-and-participation-full-package_en

plans to embed Roma equality within the upcoming *EU Anti-Racism Strategy*, *Anti-Poverty Strategy*, and *Affordable Housing Plan*. **Ms Irena Moozová**, Deputy Director-General, DG Justice and Consumers, echoed this message, noting signs of progress in education and employment but warning that poverty, segregation, and limited participation remain widespread. She underlined the need for better data, sharper targeting of resources, and continued dialogue through the new *Implementation Dialogue* with Commissioner Lahbib later this year. Together, their remarks set a reflective yet forward-looking tone for the Platform's discussions on how to accelerate Roma inclusion by 2030.

High level political panel

In this session, high-level politicians, senior policymakers, experts, and civil society leaders reflected on recent progress, ongoing challenges, and key priorities for Roma inclusion, emphasizing the need for political commitment, evidence-based policymaking, and meaningful participation of Roma communities at all levels. Their interventions also provided valuable insights and food for thought on the topics addressed during the seven parallel workshops, helping to inform future discussions and actions.

Mr. Petre Florin Manole, Minister of Labour, Family, Youth and Social Solidarity, Romania, reflected on the persistent gap between promises and outcomes in Roma inclusion over the past decades. Speaking as Romania's Minister of Labour — and as a Roma himself — he highlighted the irony of repeatedly endorsing commitments without tangible change. He called for a shift from symbolic gestures to genuine inclusion, warning that Roma communities risk being “left to pick up the pieces” if key EU funds for social cohesion are not defended. His intervention stressed the need for political will and Roma leadership in decision-making, reaffirming the guiding principle: “Nothing for Roma without Roma.”



Mr. Atanas Zafirov, Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria and Chair of the National Council for Ethnic and Integration Issues, presented Bulgaria's recent progress in advancing equality and strengthening democratic institutions, noting that the Council of Europe's decision to close its post-monitoring dialogue with Bulgaria reflects these achievements. He outlined the country's key results under the *National Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma (2021–2030)*, focusing on education, employment, health and housing. He emphasized that progress in Roma inclusion is integral to Bulgaria's broader reforms in human rights and the rule of law. He outlined key priorities for Roma inclusion in Bulgaria including the expansion of social housing and housing support programs, improvements in education and employment opportunities through skilling and re-skilling initiatives, and increased healthcare awareness, all backed by targeted national strategies and EU cohesion funds.

Ms. Sirpa Rautio, Director, EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), introduced the FRA Roma Survey 2024, covering ten EU Member States³ and three candidate countries⁴, and representing 86% of the EU's estimated Roma and Traveller population. The survey, which includes over 10,000 respondents and was implemented with Roma and Traveller interviewers in over 1,000 locations, provides the most comprehensive and comparable data on Roma living conditions and rights in Europe. She underlined that the data and methodologies are publicly available and should be used to shape evidence-based policymaking, stressing that “data must lead to action.”

³ Bulgaria, Czechia, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania and Spain.

⁴ Albania, North Macedonia, and Serbia.

Mr. Michael O’Flaherty, Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe, presented his new book “The Unheard Twelve Million: The Unstoppable Voices of Roma and Traveller Women and Girls”, inspired by extensive fieldwork and storytelling. The book aims to amplify Roma and Traveller voices, especially those of women, to challenge stereotypes and awaken public conscience. He described Roma communities as vibrant and resilient, yet facing enduring discrimination and poverty. He urged both institutions and individuals — Roma and non-Roma alike — to take responsibility for ensuring dignity, equality, and participation, stating that inclusion “must be everyone’s business.”

Mr. Hristo Petrov, Member of the European Parliament, acknowledged progress in Roma participation and education but cautioned that challenges such as segregation and misplacement of Roma children in special education remain widespread. He called for Roma participation to evolve beyond consultation towards full involvement in policy design, implementation, and monitoring. True equality, he argued, means Roma voices must contribute across all policy fields — from digitalisation to the green transition — and not be confined to the Roma inclusion agenda. His vision of success is one where Roma professionals help shape Europe’s broader future on equal terms. The key priority is tackling poverty among Roma children, as it underpins education, health, housing, and vulnerability to discrimination. He underlined that this can be addressed by fully leveraging the European Child Guarantee and ensuring Roma concerns are explicitly reflected and monitored within the EU anti-poverty strategy.

Ms. Soraya Post, Chair of the Board, ERGO Network, highlighted that the formal recognition of antigypsyism within EU policy is one of the most significant achievements of the current strategic framework. Recalling her time as a Member of the European Parliament, she noted that the adoption of the 2015 Resolution on antigypsyism was made possible thanks to strong cooperation with Roma civil society. This recognition, she said, marks a turning point — demonstrating that the EU is beginning to address the root causes of exclusion, rather than merely its symptoms such as poverty or unemployment. The key priority is ensuring political responsibility for Roma inclusion, by enforcing anti-discrimination laws with real legal and financial consequences, and strengthening cooperation between governments and civil society to tackle antigypsyism and xenophobia across Europe.

Promoting Roma equality, inclusion and participation – progress achieved and remaining challenges

The first thematic panel of the Platform brought together policymakers, activists and experts to reflect on progress made and the road ahead for Roma equality across Europe. The discussion built on insights from three workshops—on equality, poverty and social inclusion, and participation—and aimed to feed directly into future policy evaluation and development.

- **Rapporteur of the workshop on fighting and preventing antigypsyism and discrimination, Ms Anna Mirga, ERIAC**, opened the session with key takeaways from the workshop. Participants agreed that one of the greatest achievements in recent years has been the formal recognition of antigypsyism as a distinct form of racism—shifting the focus from a purely socio-economic lens to one grounded in human rights and dignity. Yet, implementation remains a major challenge. Despite progress on awareness and new equality directives, many Roma still face prejudice, weak enforcement of laws, and insufficient legal redress. Examples of promising practice included local initiatives in Sweden, where Roma communities work alongside police and public servants to combat discrimination. However, participants in the workshop stressed the need for stronger legal tools, adequate sanctions, and targeted funding. Education and awareness-raising were identified as essential to tackling majority-society prejudice, with calls for mandatory training on antigypsyism for educators, lawyers, and public officials, and for Roma history to become part of mainstream curricula.
- **Rapporteur of from the workshop on reducing poverty and social exclusion, Ms Kristiana Stoyanova, Eurochild**, underlined the complex, intergenerational nature of poverty affecting Roma families. She highlighted the European Child Guarantee as a positive model for integrated policy—addressing housing, education, health, and nutrition together. Long-term strategies and better coordination between EU and national frameworks, such as the national Roma strategic frameworks and anti-poverty policies were deemed crucial. Participants also stressed that tackling poverty requires

political will, sustained investment, and evidence-based funding decisions. A notable example from Bulgaria illustrated the scale of resources needed: €12 million were required to lift 70 families (around 400 people) out of poverty. Other structural barriers included data gaps, weak inter-agency cooperation, and persistent discrimination, as well as the need to empower Roma communities to define and drive their own solutions.

- **Rapporteur of the workshop on promoting participation, Ms. Gabriela Hrabáňová of ERGO Network**, summarized the discussion, which brought together Roma activists, local leaders, and institutional partners from the EU, Western Balkans, and Ukraine. The discussion underscored that Roma participation is not a favour but a democratic necessity. Despite progress, Roma representation in political and decision-making processes remains limited, often tokenistic, and undermined by institutional discrimination and a lack of trust. The workshop called for a dedicated EU and national action plan on Roma participation, moving beyond consultations towards real decision-making power—securing Roma seats in councils, parliaments, and committees, and ensuring a role in steering EU and national funds. Sustainable investment in Roma leadership, youth initiatives, and grassroots organisations was highlighted as essential to building long-term capacity. Protecting Roma activists from harassment and embedding Roma culture and language in education were also seen as vital to fostering belonging and resilience.



As reactions to the workshops' conclusions, **Ms Lucie Fuková, Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs, Czechia**, stressed the need for genuine Roma involvement from the earliest stages of policymaking and project design, warning against treating Roma merely as a “socially excluded group” and highlighting symbolic and institutional milestones that signal Roma as active shapers of policy. **Mr Georgios Stamatis, General Rapporteur on Roma and Travellers, PACE**, called for stronger political commitment, institutional cooperation, and solidarity between Roma and non-Roma actors, emphasizing that unity and shared responsibility are essential to combat antigypsyism and advance inclusion. **Mr Szabolcs Schmidt, Head of Unit, Non-discrimination: Anti-racism and Roma Coordination (DG JUST), European Commission**, underlined that progress on Roma inclusion remains too slow, urging Member States to implement the Equality Bodies Directive, link EU funding and the European Semester to Roma inclusion, and advance the “Roma Memory” initiative to confront discrimination and preserve historical truth.

The **Q&A session** was centered on **political representation, funding priorities, and accountability** for Roma inclusion. Representatives from Roma civil society questioned the lack of Roma voices in EU policymaking, the limited transparency of EU funds, and the weak political will across member states to implement Roma strategies. Several participants called for **dedicated funding for Roma-led initiatives**, stronger **monitoring of national strategies**, and more **Roma representation at all political levels**, including a potential Roma Commissioner. In response, **Mr Szabolcs Schmidt** outlined the European Commission’s proposal for increased civil society funding under the new *MFF (AGORA)* and its efforts to link Roma inclusion with the *European Semester* to ensure greater accountability. Other panelists stressed the need for **strong Roma leadership, alliances with broader civil society, and intersectional cooperation** with other equality movements. The session closed with calls for renewed political momentum, including a future **EU Roma Summit** and stronger partnerships among EU institutions, the Council of Europe, and national actors.

Improving Roma access to education, employment, healthcare and housing – progress achieved and remaining challenges

The second panel focused on reporting from the workshops' discussions on access to education, employment, healthcare, and housing, while also highlighting both progress made and priorities for the future.

- **Rapporteur of the workshop on access to education, Mr Stanislav Daniel, Roma Education Fund, Slovakia**, emphasized that inclusion must start from birth, as early childhood education lays the foundation for long-term success. Schools should respect Roma identity, showing children that they can be both Roma and successful, and resources should be allocated according to need rather than wealth. Success should be measured not only by attendance or test scores but by the inclusiveness and wellbeing of students, and meaningful local involvement of families and Roma organizations is essential. Mr. Stanislav emphasized that effective desegregation of Roma schools requires a combination of legislative backing, sustainable financing, and genuine engagement with both Roma and non-Roma communities to ensure local ownership. He warned against top-down or short-term solutions, noting that progress is a generational task, and highlighted the importance of focusing on concrete actions that can start immediately rather than distant targets.
- **Rapporteur of the workshop on access to employment, Ms Veronika Miškech Fričová, Carpathian Foundation, Slovakia**, presented the key points from the workshop discussions. She underscored the interconnectedness of employment with education, housing, and social inclusion. Roma employment remains hindered by discrimination, lack of trust, and weak cooperation among sectors. The gender gap in employment is widening, particularly affecting Roma women. Effective strategies include social mentorship programs, mediator roles, second-chance education, and targeted initiatives for women, but these efforts require accessible funding and strong accountability mechanisms. Ms Miškech highlighted inspiring examples of Roma entrepreneurship, particularly women's cooperatives in the Western Balkans that provide municipal services and hospitality support. These initiatives build trust with local communities, offer flexible working conditions, and create positive social and economic impact, while most other best practices discussed focused on subsidized roles, career guidance, and support interventions within Roma communities.
- **Rapporteur of the workshop on access to healthcare, Ms Carmen Herrador, FAKALI Roma women NGO, Spain**, highlighted that healthcare access for Roma is similarly interlinked with housing and employment. Innovative approaches, such as mediator programs, mobile clinics, and Roma healthcare providers, have improved. However, sustained funding, cross-sector collaboration, and community representation are critical to breaking the cycle of exclusion. Sensitivity and cultural competence are essential in delivering effective healthcare services. Ms Herrador emphasized the need for a more inclusive healthcare system for Roma women, particularly addressing discrimination faced during vulnerable moments such as pregnancy. It was recommended to ensure mandatory multicultural and intersectional training for healthcare professionals and integrating Roma values—like solidarity and family—into the system, not only to benefit Roma communities but to create a more humane healthcare system for everyone.
- **Rapporteur of the workshop on access to housing, Mr. Gabor Darózi, Habitat for Humanity**, emphasized that Roma issues must be integrated into EU and national housing strategies through a combination of mainstream and targeted policies. Ensuring tenure security, eviction protection, and attention to the needs of women, girls, and LGBTIQ communities are crucial. Roma NGOs should be involved at all stages of planning, monitoring, and implementation, while EU funding must reach Roma communities effectively. Measurable outcomes are needed to combat segregation and ensure that programs translate into real improvements on the ground. Mr Darózi highlighted also that EU funds can improve Roma housing through practical tools like a European Roma Housing Framework, strong monitoring to prevent projects from reinforcing segregation, and careful oversight of local legislation—citing a new Hungarian law that allows municipalities to restrict who can move in, which risks excluding Roma communities.

As reactions to the workshops' conclusions, **Mr Christoph Nerlich, Head of Unit, ESF and FEAD: policy and legislation (DG EMPL), European Commission**, highlighted the interconnectedness of education, employment, housing, and health, describing the need to turn a “vicious circle” of exclusion into a “virtuous

circle.” He stressed that progress requires long-term, generational effort, coordinated action at all levels—from the European Commission to local authorities—and strong community ownership, with adequate funding to support implementation. **Ms Ina Majko, Deputy Minister of Health and Social Protection, Albania**, acknowledged the progress made over the years, noting increased Roma representation and visibility. However, she cautioned that current efforts often address only the symptoms of exclusion rather than its root cause: discrimination. She suggested rethinking strategies to tackle structural barriers, while also framing Roma inclusion as mutually beneficial for broader societal integration, particularly in the context of EU accession processes in the Western Balkans. She informed about an upcoming meeting on October 6th in Tirana where ministers from the Western Balkan region will discuss progress on Roma equality, inclusion, and participation.

During the **Q&A session**, participants raised urgent questions about **persistent poverty, labor market exclusion, housing discrimination, anti-Roma hate, and the rise of far-right extremism**, emphasizing the need for concrete EU actions and better coordination among Commission departments. The Commission representatives highlighted existing tools such as anti-discrimination and up-skilling measures, and legislative enforcement, while stressing the importance of **collaboration with civil society**. Representatives emphasized that EU funds are tools to achieve policy objectives, not ends in themselves. The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) supports Roma inclusion by financing measures across education, healthcare, employment, housing, and social integration. Around 15 member states implement **ESF+ programs for Roma communities**, with a total budget of roughly €1.9 billion (including EU and national contributions), and €140 million already spent. Looking forward to the next Multiannual Financial Framework, it was highlighted that the Commission will continue to support Roma inclusion, equality and participation. Member States will prepare **national plans addressing multiple objectives**, including social inclusion of marginalized Roma. The **European Semester will guide funding use**, ensuring a coordinated approach. A key innovation is the removal of “artificial barriers” between ESF+ (soft measures) and the European Regional Development Fund (infrastructure), enabling a more integrated, and comprehensive support for Roma communities. Speakers from Hungary and advocacy organizations shared progress on employment, education, and social inclusion, but warned of ongoing challenges, including limited funding for strategic litigation and the need to address intersectional issues like gender and non-binary representation. The European Commission representatives underlined again the **importance of the national Roma strategic frameworks, integrated policy approaches, and active involvement of Roma communities**, emphasizing that while progress has been made, lasting change requires continued political will, collaboration, and attention to both social inequalities and discrimination.



Together, the panel made clear that progress in education, employment, healthcare, and housing is deeply interconnected, and sustainable change requires inclusive policies, community engagement, and accountability at every level.

Political conclusions

The closing session of the 18th European Platform for Roma Inclusion featured reflections from four key speakers on progress, challenges, and next steps for Roma inclusion.

- **Ms Roxana Mînzatu, Executive Vice-President for Social Rights and Skills, European Commission**, emphasized that Roma inclusion is both a personal and political commitment. She highlighted the EU Roma Strategic Framework and the €2.2 billion allocated through ESF Plus until 2027, supporting education, vocational training, job matching, women's empowerment, and anti-discrimination initiatives. She stressed that lasting change requires Roma communities to shape their own future, and that funding must be paired with strong national and local strategies.
- **Mr Attila Sztojka, State Secretary for Social Opportunities and Roma Relations, Hungary**, reflected on Hungary's progress since 2011, noting improvements in Roma employment, education, and access to housing. He emphasized that policies should address life situations rather than way of life, linking social and economic inclusion to sustainable work-based policies. He also highlighted the importance of engagement of local actors and civil society in translating policies into real change.
- **Mx Đorđe Jovanović, President of the European Roma Rights Centre**, stressed the need for strong legal enforcement and human rights protection, warning that political will for Roma inclusion has weakened in some member states. He highlighted strategic litigation against school segregation, forced evictions, and discrimination, while drawing attention to rising fascist ideologies and the importance of remembrance, education, and visibility of Roma LGBTIQ struggles through initiatives like the RoMagic exhibition.
- **Ms Ana Carla Pereira, Director for Equality and Non-discrimination (DG JUST), European Commission**, concluded by emphasizing the importance of honest dialogue, monitoring, and integrated approaches linking funding, law, and social policies. She highlighted intersectionality, noting the need for growing participation of Romani women and non-binary persons in decision-making, and reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to follow up through implementation dialogues and future reporting on the Strategic Framework.

Overall, the session underscored the need for coordinated action, strong political will, targeted funding, and active Roma participation to achieve meaningful and lasting inclusion across Europe.