

Many thanks to the EESC on behalf of Fundacion Secretariado Gitano for this invitation to participate in this 2nd panel entitled "The new EU Roma framework: what are the expectations of the Roma communities and of civil society organizations?"

For us, the right to participation of the Roma community is one of the key elements for the exercise of a full citizenship. The recent framework approved by the Commission and at the same time the Council Recommendation gives a key and essential role to participation, which is one of the main rights that should be promoted and guaranteed in the coming years.

From FSG we have always believed and supported this idea, encouraging participants in our programs to take part with their opinion in all those initiatives that are an essential axis for the future of the Roma community. It is a must to get involved and participate in all the spheres of the society.

Following that, and focusing on the Next National Roma Inclusion Strategy in Spain, last December 2020 and January 2021 a survey was conducted among 250 young Roma people participating in the FSG in 12 Autonomous Communities.

The objective of this Survey is to know the opinion and assessment of Roma population based on the impact that the Strategy has had on their lives during the 2012-2020 implementation period, taking into account the different priority areas of incidence (Education, Employment, Housing and Health). We intended to learn as well about the assessment of the complementary lines of action that are: participation, gender equality, non-discrimination and promotion of culture. **If we want to create a new and strong Strategy we should ask and involve the community in this process.**

Some data about the survey:

* **24.5% consider that education is the most important element and the one that should be influenced the most, since it guarantees them a better future and a better quality of life.**
* 83% of the Roma people surveyed state that there is at least 1 or more than 1 school in their city where the largest number of students is Roma.
* **46% of Roma people who carried out the survey perceive the educational system as bad or fair, acknowledge that there has been some progress, but assure that there is still school segregation,** that there is discrimination and that there are inequalities between Roma and non-Roma students.
* **58.4% believe that the educational system does not promote values ​​such as tolerance, respect for cultural diversity, etc. and they feel little recognized within the educational system**

18.2% of those surveyed consider that employment is the second area that should be improved, since they consider that there is a large number of unemployed people and it is a factor that affects the poverty situation in which many Roma families are.

* **95% indicated that there is discrimination in the labour market**
* When asked if "they believe that the objectives of the Strategy are being met in the field of employment", 48% consider that, although there has been progress, the objectives have not been achieved, at least in their closest environment

Finally, the third area that they consider to be the most important is that of Equality and non-discrimination with 11.2%.

* **78.8% of the Roma people surveyed acknowledge that, although there has been progress, they have received discrimination and different treatment for being Roma**.
* 60% responded that although there has been progress, in their city there are still neighbourhoods where the majority of the population is Roma and / or migrants, and in these neighbourhoods there are fewer resources and furniture in worse condition than in the rest of the city.

All these opinions expressed here served as the basis for preparing a series of proposals for improvements or measures for the next national inclusion strategy for 2021-2030. These conclusions will be passed on to the Institutions so that they may take them into account in the general evaluation that is being carried out.

From an institutional point of view and based on all these data that we have offered, we believe that, in order to work with positive expectations for the next Framework and NRIS, it is necessary to introduce changes at the legislative and political level in favour of the Roma communities that are in a situation of exclusion and poverty. It is necessary to adopt and approve structural plans endowed with sufficient economic funds and based on long-term work and that counteract the consequences produced by the pandemic among the Roma population. The participation of Roma people in these processes of building the future is an indispensable element to provide this work with cohesion and uniformity. The recently approved Child Guarantee Strategy, EU Anti Racism Plan or The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan are examples in the right direction, constituting essential legislative and political tools for this next decade.

Following that, the new framework that we are discussing here analyses in a very concrete way how the inclusion of the Roma population in Europe should be built over the next 10 years, what elements are necessary and which actors should be involved from the beginning. The focus on 7 different and flexible axes and the inclusion of a series of minimum objectives in each of them make it an ambitious document. However, national strategies will undoubtedly be the main protagonists from now on, since they must adapt this series of recommendations to their particular context, also including measures that help alleviate the impact of Covid19 among Roma population. In any case, this new scenario, at the European level and in each member state, must focus and aspire to very specific objectives: eliminating poverty and social exclusion and guaranteeing the exercise of civil and social rights as a way to achieve full equality in the same conditions as the general population.

Thank you so much for your attention on behalf of Fundacion Secretariado Gitano.

<https://participaciongitanos.org/participation-in-the-fsg/>

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