



European Economic and Social Committee | Comité économique et social européen

**PERIOD** **ACTIVITY REPORT**  
**2018** **STUDY GROUP ON THE**  
**2020** **INCLUSION OF THE ROMA**

**DIRECTORATE C – LEGISLATIVE  
WORK**

**PRESIDENT: Erika Koller**

## Introduction

Today's study group on Roma Inclusion initially started in 2014 as a project entitled *Better inclusion of the Roma community through civil society initiatives*, which aimed to explore the impact of relevant European legislation from a civil society perspective. The experience with this project emphasised the need for further involvement in Roma issues. For this reason, it further developed into a study group on Roma inclusion, pursuing the following objectives:

- To evaluate the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 as well as the strategies adopted by the Member States;
- To promote the level of involvement of Roma representatives and organised civil society in Roma issues at EU level;
- To offer a platform for identifying and sharing good practices;
- To encourage concrete action in the policy areas in which the Roma community still face discrimination

Over the last few years (2018-2020), the group sought to gather recommendations for the post-2020 Framework for Roma Integration. The current Framework, which will expire this year, has provided an impetus for instruments targeting Roma inclusion at EU level. Notwithstanding this, the situation of the Roma remains precarious, strengthening our resolve to engage with relevant partners through our events and activities, to better understand the realities faced by the Roma. The report produced by our group puts together the knowledge we have gathered through these events and provides recommendations aimed to strengthen the upcoming framework to bring about much needed change for the Roma community.

*Erika Koller*

President of Study Group on the Inclusion of the Roma

# Table of Contents

Introduction (message from President) ..... 2

Activities and main findings ..... 4

Appendix I - List of meetings and events ..... 6

## Activities and main findings

---

Throughout this mandate, the study group (SG) has organised public hearings on issues and policy areas which still require action for Roma inclusion, amongst them health, housing and employment. Through its public hearings, the SG aimed to keep the Roma situation on the European agenda and to offer organisations a platform where they can share experiences on their work and engage in dialogue with representatives of other EU institutions. Through the country visits and more specifically through meetings with civil society organisations (CSOs) carried out in the framework of these missions, the SG sought to assess the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS), the role of national Roma organisations in this regard, and also their views on the state of implementation of the NRIS in the respective country. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the SG also issued a declaration, together with the EESC president, addressed to the various EU institutions raising concern over the situation of the Roma communities and to suggest recommendations for action.

The feedback gathered from all the activities has been compiled in a report as a contribution to the new post-2020 Roma strategy. These activities have shown that strategies and mechanisms for the Roma cannot be effective if the Roma are not consulted and continue to be underrepresented in the public and political sphere. More involvement of CSOs in designing policies geared towards the Roma is needed, in view of the remarkable efforts and incessant work they carry out in various Member States to seek to improve the lives of the Roma. Regrettably, despite the invaluable recommendations they can offer, consultations with CSOs in the various Member States are not always conducted in a proper manner. Whilst funding for projects on Roma integration is important, it is worth noting that such projects should complement, rather than replace legislative changes and binding legal instruments. The post-2020 strategy, should tend to offer binding strategies for Roma inclusion, rather than simply recommendations. A regular evaluation of the strategies on Roma inclusion is crucial so that these can remain up-to-date with the evolving situation on the ground.

Training for EU police officers on what constitutes discriminatory policing practices should be provided, whilst existing platforms for dialogue between CSOs and police forces should be expanded. In view of its upward trend, also in view of the COVID-19 pandemic, antigypsyism and the fight against it should feature prominently in the post-2020 strategy. Effective enforcement of antidiscrimination legislation and criminalisation of hate speech are needed.

Concerning education, the feedback gathered by the SG shows that early school leaving amongst Roma children should be tackled via a cross-sectoral approach encompassing housing, health and poverty. The state and lack of connectivity of the accommodation and the areas in which some Roma children reside is affecting their educational attainment, with the current pandemic impinging even more on their participation in education. The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined even more the need to solve the problem of Roma camps. Many of them have no access to running water, making it extremely hard to maintain the social distancing and hygiene necessary to suppress contagion. Dividing families in communal homes and forced evictions without offering real accommodation alternatives are not viable solutions.

The engagement of businesses within training and educational projects targeting Roma is crucial, so that these can result in real work opportunities for this community. The development of social enterprises and assistance in setting up cooperatives can help support Roma employment, also for Roma women. The SG's work has also shown that solutions are urgently needed to solve the problem of undocumented Roma, given that their irregular status is impinging on their prospects of getting regular employment. Equal access to healthcare should be the guiding principle in all Member States. Well-equipped mobile health units should be in operation to reach Roma communities living in inaccessible areas, whilst the number of Roma health mediators needs to increase.

## Appendix I – List of meetings and events

	< April 2018	2019	> October 2020	Total
<b>Study Group/PSG/Observatory meetings</b>				
Meetings in Brussels	2	3	1	6
Meetings outside Brussels				
Extraordinary meetings				
<b>Fact-finding missions</b>	1	3	1	5
<b>Conferences and hearings organised by the SG/PSG/Observatory</b>	2	3	0	5
<b>Participation of members in events, meetings</b>				
In Brussels	3	5	0	8
Outside Brussels				