ROMANI EARLY YEARS NETWORK

#EUROMACHILDREN22

BREAKING THE SILENCE

The right of young Roma children in Europe to develop and thrive

Data on key areas impacting child's development

Young Roma children status in

BELGIUM

Focus on Flemish speaking municipalities

DISCRIMINATION

Roma families and their young children are facing ongoing discrimination in all domains of their life.

FACT

In the last 5 years, 15% of Roma and 25% of Travellers in Belgium felt discriminated against (FRA, 2019).

FAMILY AND LIVING ENVIRONMENT

Living conditions

The low socioeconomic status of Roma families results that many young Roma children are growing up without electricity and heating.

FACT 1

25% of the Roma children and 21% of the Traveller children in Belgium live in severe material deprivation (FRA, 2019).

FACT 2

Almost all Travellers in Belgium (95%) are of the opinion that there are too few places -especially suitable caravan sites- where they can stay legally (FRA, 2019).

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Access to health information

Roma families with young children do not have access to relevant information about the child's development.

FACT

A case study on vaccination of Roma children in Brussels (Yap, 2012) reports that none of the children were fully vaccinated. This shows that Roma families are not well informed about the existing (and free) services. This could be caused by distrust vis-à-vis services within the families and/or absence of outreaching service policies (Nicaise, 2019).

Healthy Nutrition

A vast majority of Roma parents are aware of the importance of a healthy diet for their children, which can't always be provided due to poor living conditions and low SES.

Healthcare

Many parents with young children still face challenges in accessing the special healthcare services.

FACT

Roma and Travellers living in Flanders live around 14 years less than the general population, and only 55% of caravan dwellers describe their own health as good. (FRA, 2019).

EARLY LEARNING

Accessibility

For many parents with young children, access to ECD services remains a major barrier.

Childcare

More than half of Roma parents prefer to take care of their children on their own instead of enrolling them in childcare services.
In addition, for many Roma parents, childcare is not affordable!

FACT

In general, **limited number of Roma children use ECEC services (0-3)** (Nicaise, 2019).

Education

Many Roma parents are concerned about the quality of the care of their children during the school day.

FACT 1

While Flanders has one of the highest preschool attendance rates (over 98% of 3-5 years old), lower and irregular attendance is reported for Roma children (Be-REYN, 2017). According to FRA (2019), only 70% of 4-6 years old Roma children attend preschool.

Enrollment ≠ regular attendance!

FACT 2

Concerning the Travellers families, **only 39% of the children 6-15 years old** attend compulsory education (FRA, 2019).

Recent qualitative research confirmed that for these itinerant Travellers the figures are very alarming, the HIVA report from 2020 states that for the questioned itinerant Travellers **none of the children are enrolled in a school.**

RESPONSIVE PARENTING

Support

The main source of support in raising children is the family, their own network of people.

The REYN Research Study in Belgium (Flemish community) involved focus groups with nine Roma families with young children and in-depth interviews with two policymakers and seven professionals. The activities were conducted with the support of representatives from Roma and Traveller communities in Belgium.

The findings of this qualitative research are supported by recent large-scale studies in Belgium, listed below:

1. *Reidsma, M., Juchtmans, G., Chakkar, S., & De Cuyper, P. (2020). Travelling Travellers. An overview of the living conditions of travelling Travellers and existing supporting initiatives. HIVA (KU LEUVEN). 2020.*
2. *FRA (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights). (2019). Country Sheet. Roma and Travellers in Belgium. Key results of the 2019 Roma and Travellers survey.*
3. *Be-REYN (2017). Shadow report on the midterm review of the EU framework for national Roma strategies. Ghent.*
4. *Nicaise, I. Vandevoort, L., Juchtmans, G., Buffel, V., Unver, O. i Van Den Broeck, K.; Bircan, T.(2019). Feasibility study for a Child Guarantee. Country report –Belgium.*

The REYN Early Childhood Research Study has been carried out with financial support from the Open Society Foundations, and in partnership with the Roma Studies Groups (CEG) at CREA – University of Barcelona. The study in Belgium has been led by the Centre for Innovation in the Early Years, VBJK, the hosting organization of REYN Belgium.

Discover our studies in other countries: Click here!

The Romani Early Years Network (REYN) is a European-wide initiative of ISSA that promotes access to quality early childhood development for Roma and Travellers children, professionalism in early years services, and a better representation of Roma and Travellers in the early childhood workforce.

ISSA is an early childhood membership association that serves as a learning community and a champion for quality, equitable and integrated services. The ISSA network is a dynamic mix of expert organisations, ranging from NGOs to research institutes, from public bodies to early childhood services, primarily from Europe and Central Asia.