

#EUROMACHILDREN

Breaking the silence

THE RIGHT OF EACH YOUNG ROMA CHILD
IN EUROPE TO DEVELOP AND THRIVE

EUROPEAN REYN EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDY

Exploring the Status of Young Roma Children and their Families



ROMANI
EARLY YEARS
NETWORK

an initiative of



INTERNATIONAL
STEP by STEP
ASSOCIATION

KEY FINDINGS AND CHALLENGES

REYN Early Childhood Research at a glance

FAMILY STATUS–LIVING CONDITIONS

Roma families face significant challenges regarding their socio-economic status and living conditions, such as low educational levels, high unemployment rates, poor living conditions, and barriers to accessing financial support.

6 OUT OF 10 Roma children live in areas exposed to harmful effects of air pollution.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The health and well-being of young Roma children and families are affected by such issues as inadequate immunization, poor maternal health awareness, barriers to accessing family and emotional support, and poor dietary habits and routines.

1 IN 5 young Roma children do not get all the required vaccines for their age.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Safety and security concerns arise from barriers to social security or social protection, as well as growing up in neighborhoods exposed to crime, violence, and vandalism.

7 OUT OF 10 Roma children grow up in unsafe neighborhoods.

EARLY LEARNING

Early learning opportunities for Roma children are hindered by barriers to quality early childhood education services and other learning environment spaces or facilities. Besides the lack or scarce availability and proximity of services, language barriers stand out as the most common challenge affecting children's access and full participation.

6 OUT OF 10 Roma children do not have access to quality early childhood services because they are unreachable or unavailable.

RESPONSIVE PARENTING

Challenges related to responsive parenting include Roma mothers being the primary caregivers without sufficient support from other family members and a lack of awareness among caregivers about the power of play for a child's development.

3 OUT OF 10 Roma caregivers report not reading enough to their children.

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination and antigypsyism are prevalent issues affecting young Roma children and their families. While antigypsyism remains deeply rooted in social and cultural attitudes and institutional practices, ongoing discrimination is experienced in various aspects of life, including access to public services, housing, employment, and education.



60% of young children face discrimination when accessing early childhood and public services, according to interviews with early childhood professionals.*

*The study shows that in many cases, parents were not able to (couldn't) identify discriminatory practices as such.

A CALL FOR COORDINATED EUROPEAN AND NATIONAL ACTION

Moving towards a fundamental realization of the rights of young Roma children.

- 1. FOSTERING CROSS-SECTORAL POLICY COORDINATION AT EU LEVEL:** In order to create lasting change and sustainable impact for young Roma children and their families, the European Union (EU) must ensure cross-sectoral coordination across its policy initiatives to target the most vulnerable population in Europe. This includes connecting efforts in education, health, social protection, housing, and employment policies and programs, as well as fostering partnerships among public, private, and non-governmental stakeholders. By working together across sectors and policy areas, the EU can ensure a comprehensive and cohesive approach to addressing the complex challenges faced by young Roma children and their families, so that young Roma children are provided with equal opportunities to develop and thrive from the first day of their lives.
- 2. LEVERAGING THE CHILD GUARANTEE POLICY INSTRUMENT:** To effectively address growing concerns around child poverty, the European Union and Member States should pay specific attention to young Roma children and their families as part of the implementation of the Council Recommendation on Child Guarantee. Member States should focus on addressing the unique challenges faced by young Roma children, who often experience extreme poverty, marginalization, and discrimination in all spheres of life. This would involve developing targeted interventions to ensure young Roma children's access to quality education and learning opportunities, healthcare, housing, and nutrition while promoting social inclusion and combating antigypsyism to foster long-term improvements in their living conditions and opportunities for development and growth. The Child Guarantee can serve as a catalyst for change and sustainable impact, improving the lives and future prospects of young Roma children across Europe.
- 3. PRIORITIZING THE MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN ACHIEVING THE BARCELONA TARGETS:** the European Union should continuously call on Member States to introduce and implement ambitious national plans aiming at improving access to and quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC) services, prioritizing the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, specifically Roma children. Leveraging the Council Recommendations on the Barcelona targets can help bridge the gap between Roma and non-Roma children from an early age. By achieving the Barcelona targets, the EU can foster a more equitable and inclusive society where all children, regardless of their ethnicity, have opportunities to thrive.
- 4. PRIORITIZING CHILD- AND FAMILY-CENTERED NATIONAL ROMA INCLUSION STRATEGIES:** European countries should prioritize the status of young Roma children in a comprehensive and inclusive way by incorporating specific actions and effective measures and programs around key areas impacting child development. These would include improving the status of the family and living conditions, promoting health and well-being, enabling safety and security, prioritizing early learning, and fostering responsive parenting.
- 5. COMBATING ANTIGYPSYISM:** European institutions and countries should implement resolute policies and introduce effective measures to fight against antigypsyism, particularly against the discrimination of young Roma children and their families in key areas hindering child development and family well-being. This includes access to inclusive education, health, and social services, as well as housing and employment, and enabling their full participation in a democratic society.
- 6. MAKING SOUND DATA-BASED DECISIONS FOR REAL TRANSFORMATION:** To ensure a real transformation of young Roma children and the status of their families, all policies and actions affecting their lives should be informed by sound data indicating the nature and magnitude of the major problems to be addressed. European institutions and countries, therefore, should make sure their decisions are well-informed, by bringing key data from the field regarding the multiple aspects impacting a child's rounded and healthy development, from before the child's birth until their entry into primary school. To effectively support the holistic development of every young Roma child, a safe, healthy and nurturing family and community context must be ensured.

ABOUT REYN EARLY CHILDHOOD RESEARCH

The REYN Early Childhood Research sheds light on young Roma children and their parents throughout Europe. The study brings together unprecedented Roma-related early childhood data, exploring six key areas impacting upon the child's development: family and living environment, health and well-being, safety and security, early learning, responsive parenting, and discrimination and antigypsyism.

The study has been carried out in the 11 countries in which National REYNs operate: Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine.

Data has been analysed from questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus groups from over 900 people, including more than 500 Roma families, 312 professionals, 56 practitioners, and 47 policymakers. Despite drawing from a considerable sample size, the present data should not generalize the status of young Roma children and their families in countries or in Europe as a whole.

The findings from the REYN Early Childhood Research are of an **indicative nature**. They **flag the challenges and barriers that need further investigation in order to inform transformative approaches and policy actions which may improve the status of young Roma children in Europe**. In turn, this will enable each young Roma child to reach their full potential – to grow and thrive!

The figures provided on page 2 are the average of the 11 countries.

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Discover the findings in the individual countries:

www.reyn.eu/resources

Sign up to receive your copy with a full cross-country report:



The Romani Early Years Network (REYN) is a European-wide initiative of ISSA that promotes access to quality early childhood development for Roma and Traveller 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 organizations, ranging from NGOs to research institutes, from public bodies to early childhood services, primarily from Europe and Central Asia.