



Florence Model United Nations

Research Guide

Organized by the International School of Florence

Committee: Council of the European Union (CoEU)

Topic 2: Addressing continued discrimination of the Roma people and Travelers throughout the EU.

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Table of Contents

Committee: Council of the European Union	1
Topic: (2) Addressing continued discrimination of the Roma people and Travelers throughout the EU	1
Chairs: Elettra Angelopoulos,	1
I. Introduction	2
II. Definition of Key Terms	2
III. General Overview	2
IV. Major Parties Involved and their Views	2
V. Relevant UN Documents and Articles	2
VI. Questions to Consider	2
VII. Conclusion	2
VIII. Bibliography	2

I. Introduction

The Roma and Travelers, two minority ethnic groups, have been subjected to discrimination in Europe for centuries. Although integrated into European society for centuries, they continue to experience exclusion, marginalization, and discrimination on a wide variety of fronts, ranging from discriminatory access to education and employment opportunities to higher rates of poverty and poor living conditions. In the European Union, the Roma are among the most marginalized populations, despite many efforts to address these disparities. In a survey conducted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in 2023, out of every four Roma respondents, one said they had been discriminated against in education, employment, housing, and the right to access healthcare. Furthermore, the 2023 Discrimination in the EU Eurobarometer discovered that over 21% of people over the age of 15 reported having been discriminated against during the previous 12 months. The unemployment rate among the Roma population continues to be proportionately high. In Slovakia, 78% of the Roma and 73% in the Czech Republic experience discrimination when applying for work. The exclusion continues to be a contributing factor toward higher poverty and living below the standard for such groups. Roma children are often separated within education systems. There are around 48 schools in Slovakia that operate 'two-shift' because Roma children are only taught during the afternoons due to a lack of classrooms. Such operation is a manifestation of institutional racial discrimination against the Roma. Though the EU has set up policies and strategies aimed at facilitating the inclusion of these groups, entrenched social prejudice and lack of effective implementation of such policies remain. To end this prevalent discrimination calls not only for changes in laws and policies but for a cultural change to encourage acceptance, equality, and respect for Travelers and Roma people.

II. Definition of Key Terms

- **Romani/Roma People:** This is an Indo-Aryan cultural group formally known as gypsies who traditionally live a nomadic lifestyle. There are communities of Roma all throughout Europe, but the population is more concentrated in the Baltic (Eastern European) states.
- **Anti-Roma Sentiment:** This is the phrase used to describe the widespread prejudice and hostility towards Roma communities, which drives much of the systemic discrimination they experience.
- **Human Rights Violations:** Roma and Traveller communities face numerous human rights violations, such as forced evictions and lack of access to essential services.
- **Segregation:** Segregation is a direct result of discrimination and marginalization. Understanding how Roma and Traveller communities are often isolated from mainstream society is crucial in addressing the root of the problem.
- **Roma Integration Strategy:** The EU's Roma Integration Strategy is a framework designed to address these issues. It provides solutions and goals for improving the lives of Roma people through access to education, healthcare, employment, and housing.

- **Ethnic Discrimination:** Ethnic discrimination is a primary driver of exclusion for Roma and Traveller communities. Recognizing this form of discrimination is crucial to understanding the barriers Roma people face in all aspects of life.

III. General Overview



The continued discrimination of Roma people and Travelers across the European Union extends beyond just social exclusion and economic inequality. This issue has deep historical roots and significant implications for human rights, social cohesion, and equality. Despite efforts to promote inclusion, Roma and Traveler communities still face high levels of segregation, prejudice, and marginalization in many EU member states. These communities often experience limited access to basic services such as education, healthcare, and housing. Furthermore, widespread anti-Roma sentiment

fuels discriminatory practices in the workforce and within law enforcement, leading to a cycle of poverty and exclusion. Addressing this issue is critical not only for improving the lives of marginalized communities but also for fostering greater unity, fairness, and social justice within the EU.

IV. Major Parties Involved and their Views

Slovakia: Slovakia has a significant Roma population, and the country has made some efforts to address the discrimination faced by Roma and Traveler communities. However, the Slovak government has faced criticism for not fully implementing EU recommendations on Roma integration. Slovakia continues to struggle with high levels of segregation, particularly in education, housing, and employment, where Roma people often face systemic barriers.

Hungary: Hungary is home to one of the largest Roma populations in Europe, and the situation of Roma people in the country has been a subject of international scrutiny. Hungary has adopted some policies aimed at improving the conditions of Roma communities, but these efforts are often seen as insufficient or ineffective. Discrimination, forced evictions, and limited access to public services are common challenges faced by the Roma in Hungary. The Hungarian government has been criticized for its nationalistic rhetoric and policies that sometimes exacerbate anti-Roma sentiment.

Romania: Romania has made efforts to integrate its large Roma population into mainstream society, but Roma people continue to face widespread discrimination and segregation, particularly in rural areas. The Romanian government has endorsed EU measures for Roma inclusion but faces challenges in implementing these strategies due to a lack of political will and limited resources. In Romania, Roma

communities often live in informal settlements with poor infrastructure, and there are high rates of illiteracy and unemployment.

France: In France, Roma and Traveler communities face significant challenges, including forced evictions, discrimination in education, and barriers to employment. The French government has faced criticism from both domestic and international organizations for its treatment of Roma people, particularly for policies that force Roma families to relocate from informal settlements. France has a complex relationship with its Roma population, where Roma communities are often seen as "outsiders" or "temporary" residents, leading to exclusion from mainstream society.

Bulgaria: Bulgaria, like many other Eastern European countries, has a large Roma population that continues to experience high levels of discrimination. Roma people in Bulgaria often face segregation in education, poor living conditions, and limited access to healthcare and employment. The Bulgarian government has committed to improving Roma integration, particularly through the National Roma Integration Strategy, but implementation has been slow and inconsistent. The country has been criticized for the lack of enforcement of anti-discrimination laws and for its failure to address widespread prejudice against Roma.

V. Relevant UN Documents and Articles

1. UN General Assembly Resolution 72/149 (2017): The Rights of Roma People

This resolution highlights the ongoing challenges faced by Roma people globally, emphasizing the need for stronger measures to combat discrimination, exclusion, and marginalization. It calls on governments to implement effective strategies for integrating Roma communities into all aspects of society, including education, healthcare, and employment, and stresses the importance of improving living conditions for Roma populations. The resolution urges member states to uphold the human rights of Roma individuals and to prevent violence and discrimination based on ethnicity or social status.

2. UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) General Recommendation No. 27 (2000): Discrimination Against Roma

This recommendation addresses the specific forms of discrimination that Roma people face and calls for immediate action to end segregation and marginalization. It urges governments to adopt anti-discrimination laws, improve the living conditions of Roma communities, and provide access to equal opportunities. The recommendation stresses the need for public awareness campaigns to combat stereotypes and negative perceptions about Roma people and the importance of protecting Roma children's rights to education and healthcare.

VI. Questions to Consider

- What policies or actions has your country implemented to address the discrimination and marginalization of Roma and Traveler communities, and how effective have they been?
- How does your country plan to balance national sovereignty with EU recommendations regarding Roma integration, especially considering domestic political and social challenges?
- What role do you believe the EU should play in enforcing Roma rights and ensuring member states comply with anti-discrimination laws?
- How can international organizations and civil society work together to combat anti-Roma sentiment and ensure greater inclusion of Roma and Traveler communities in education, healthcare, and employment?
- What steps can your country take to foster better cultural understanding and reduce negative stereotypes about Roma and Traveler communities within the general population?

VII. Conclusion

The continued discrimination of Roma and Traveler communities in the EU presents significant challenges to social cohesion, equality, and human rights. Addressing this issue requires concerted efforts from national governments, the EU, and civil society to ensure equal access to education, healthcare, and employment while combating segregation and hate crimes. Stakeholders must prioritize the implementation of anti-discrimination laws, increase public awareness, and foster cultural understanding. International cooperation and sustained political will are essential in creating an inclusive society where Roma and Traveler communities can fully participate and thrive.

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