

In Special Consultative Status With:



UNITED NATIONS  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC  
AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

# WORLD ROMA FEDERATION



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## **World Roma Federation's Position Paper for the HLPF 2023 and the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.**

### **I. Introduction**

The World Roma Federation ROM-ESCO initiative corresponds with the UN High Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development Goals, focusing on the Roma community's well-being and prosperity. As significant populations of Roma continue to face challenges related to poverty, social exclusion, and access to basic services, it is imperative to address these issues in order to achieve universal sustainability and equality.

ROM-ESCO emphasizes the importance of addressing the many obstacles faced by the Roma community, such as discrimination, prejudice, insufficient access to healthcare and education, and inadequate housing. These issues have become increasingly relevant as we confront a global COVID-19 pandemic that has underscored existing inequalities and further marginalized vulnerable communities.

In an effort to foster inclusive growth and equal opportunities for all, ROM-ESCO concentrates on several key Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 1: No Poverty; SDG 2: Zero Hunger; SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation; SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities; SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities; SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions; SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals). These goals are pursued in collaboration with various international frameworks, such as the Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

By endorsing the SDGs in over 193 countries, the global community commits to address poverty eradication and sustainable development ambitions through an inclusive, equitable, integrated, and cross-sectoral approach. ROM-ESCO focuses on these targeted goals to ensure improved living conditions for the Roma people by addressing key concerns such as affordable housing, public transportation accessibility, increased access to essential resources like clean water, and reduced criminalization of their identity.

Furthermore, ROM-ESCO believes that fostering balanced territorial development should inform national, regional, and local policies in fulfilling these Sustainable Development Goals. To be successful in this endeavor, active participation from all stakeholders is vital – particularly from marginalized groups who have historically been left behind in the policymaking process.

Originating from India, the Roma community has been an integral part of European societies for centuries. Despite their long-standing presence, they have continuously faced human rights violations in Europe and across the world. It is crucial to address and counter these issues in order to foster a fair and equitable society that respects the rights and dignity of every individual.

A top-down approach is essential in addressing the human rights violations faced by the Roma community. By analyzing the issue from a systemic perspective and developing comprehensive policies, we can tackle the root causes of discrimination and injustice. This method involves engaging with government institutions, non-governmental organizations, and civil society to raise awareness, create inclusive policies, and hold those responsible for violations accountable. Implementing a top-down strategy is a vital step towards dismantling prejudiced norms and ensuring that Roma individuals are treated with respect and dignity they deserve in all aspects of their lives.

### **2023 UN HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM (HLPF):**

The central theme of the 2023 HLPF revolves around "Accelerating recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and attaining complete fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development across all levels." The 2023 HLPF will conduct a comprehensive review of Sustainable Development Goals 6 on clean water and sanitation, 7 on affordable and clean energy, 9 on industry, innovation, and infrastructure, and particularly 17 on partnerships for the Goals.

The forum will examine the unique and specific impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on all Sustainable Development Goals, recognizing their unified, inseparable, and interconnected nature. As SDG 17 is being emphasized this year, we advocate for its extensive application and correlation with all the SDGs, focusing on fostering solid partnerships among governments and other sectors for the betterment of the Roma community. The pandemic has significantly impacted Roma Communities, particularly in densely populated areas and informal settlements.. It is crucial to collaborate and create a united front in order to ensure that the Roma community is not left behind in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Systemic Racism and Discrimination Towards the Roma Community: The Importance of SDG 16 and 17**

Systemic racism and discrimination against the Roma community pervades various sectors such as education, employment, housing, healthcare, and political representation. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) reveals that 80% of the Roma population in nine EU countries live below their nation's poverty lines. Stereotypes, prejudices, and biased laws contribute to their continuous marginalization. Tackling systemic racism and discrimination against the Roma community necessitates direct government engagement in the pursuit of equality and social justice, as emphasized by Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 16 and 17.

SDG 16 focuses on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels. By actively involving legislators and policymakers in dialogues and advocacy efforts concerning the

Roma community, we can strive for essential changes to the legislative framework currently perpetuating biases against this marginalized group. Governments must be urged to evaluate and amend existing discriminatory policies in vital areas such as education, housing, employment, healthcare, and political representation to align with SDG 16 objectives.

In conjunction with SDG 16, SDG 17 emphasizes strengthening global partnerships to support and achieve sustainable development goals across various sectors. Governments should encourage initiatives that foster mutual understanding between the Roma community and broader society while challenging deep-seated stereotypes. These partnerships will help promote inclusivity through education, cultural exchanges, and other collaborative efforts. The active involvement of governments in pursuing both SDG 16 and 17 is imperative for fostering long-lasting change and advancing the rights of the Roma community across Europe.

### **Marginalization of the Roma Community and its Relevance to SDG 10**

In countries such as Romania and Hungary, the Roma community faces discrimination in securing quality education for their children, which is a crucial aspect of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 10 - Reduced Inequalities. As an illustration, 63% of young Roma adults have not finished upper secondary education, in contrast to only 13% among non-Roma Europeans. Additionally, employment disparities exist – around 43% of working-age Roma people are employed compared to a European average of 73% among non-Roma individuals.

Housing segregation leads to substandard living conditions for many Roma communities, with forced evictions displacing families without sufficient assistance or compensation. Health disparities persist between Roma and non-Roma populations due to limited access to healthcare services and a higher rate of chronic diseases. All these factors underline the importance of addressing inequalities in line with SDG 10.

In countries outside the European Union, such as the Former Yugoslav nations and several Latin American countries, the challenges faced by Roma communities are similar to those in Romania and Hungary. Discrimination against this marginalized group hampers their access to quality education, employment opportunities, and appropriate housing. Cultural stigmas often lead to social exclusion and diminished socio-economic mobility for the Roma community. This marginalization causes disparities in healthcare access, resulting in poorer health outcomes for the Roma population compared to non-Roma individuals.

These circumstances underscore the need for global efforts aimed at addressing and eliminating systemic barriers faced by Roma communities, regardless of their geographical location. By actively working towards achieving SDG 10 by reducing inequalities, societies can support the development and inclusion of marginalized groups like the Roma community within various nations.

## **Aligning the World Roma Federation's Method with SDG 17**

Advocating for human rights among at-risk communities has been a core mission of the World Roma Federation (WRF) through its top-down strategies, striving to counteract prejudice towards the Roma population. Unfortunately, numerous nations that have adopted international human rights treaties for the protection of marginalized groups have failed to enforce or execute these agreements effectively.

In response to European Commissioner Helena Dalli's assertion that the European Commission lacks jurisdiction over self-determination and statelessness, it becomes essential that our pursuit of autonomy is recognized on a more comprehensive global level. The United Nations must take an active role in supporting the World Roma Federation by encouraging dialogue and addressing the needs of vulnerable communities. In accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 17 (partnerships for the goals), bringing together the UN and WRF to foster communication and collaboration will lead to further advancement in implementing and enforcing human rights treaties among countries that have not successfully done so thus far. This partnership will not only strengthen global advocacy for marginalized groups like the Roma people, but also contribute to achieving a crucial component of SDG 17.

## **Recommendations for the United Nations and Member States on Accelerating COVID-19 Recovery and Full Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at All Levels**

Incorporating the SDGs 6, 7, 10, 11, 16, and 17, innovative frameworks, policy proposals, distinctive national strategies, and suggestions are available for member states to enhance their efforts in recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and fully implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These recommendations emphasize countries' responsibility to meet their global commitments and promote greater accountability and transparency in addressing the challenges arising from the pandemic. A notable proposal involves granting observer status to relevant organizations at the United Nations.

Such a status would enable these organizations to directly engage with member states, thus boosting their advocacy efforts for post-pandemic recovery and sustainable development at governmental levels. Specialized rapporteurs on public health, socioeconomic development, housing, education, and other related fields should be encouraged to take assertive action on issues linked to COVID-19 recovery and achieving sustainable development goals. Currently, many existing frameworks and declarations may appear symbolic; however, facilitating tangible change can be achieved by working closely with member states and mobilizing engaged NGOs and affiliated organizations.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the World Roma Federation's position paper emphasizes the urgency to address the ongoing marginalization of the Roma community and its relevance to SDG 10, focusing on reduced inequalities in education, employment, housing, and healthcare. By aligning with SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals), the United Nations can contribute significantly to achieving

transformative change for this vulnerable group. Partnerships between the UN and WRF will foster communication and collaboration, ensuring effective implementation of human rights treaties, enforcement of global commitments, and promotion of accountability among member states.

As countries worldwide recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and strive to fully implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, incorporating innovative frameworks, policy proposals, and national strategies that emphasize SDGs 6, 7, 10, 11, 16, and 17 will be crucial. Granting observer status to relevant organizations at the United Nations will empower these entities to work closely with member states in addressing post-pandemic recovery challenges and achieving sustainable development. The United Nations must remain committed to endorsing specialized rapporteurs' assertive action in promoting positive change for marginalized communities such as the Roma people. Through a collective global effort championing accountability and transparency at all levels of governance, a just and equitable future can be achieved for all.