

# WRITTEN INPUT

FROM THE EUROPEAN ROMA RIGHTS CENTRE

Written input from the European Roma Rights Centre to the European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST) for the 2026 Report for the implementation of National Roma Strategic Frameworks

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CHALLENGING DISCRIMINATION PROMOTING EQUALITY

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In the Member States with the largest Roma populations, progress on Roma inclusion and participation has too often been undermined by weak governance, endemic corruption, and routine segregation, which have gone hand-in-hand with unabashed anti-Roma racism from the highest public offices. Due to space constraints, this ERRC briefing focuses on segregation, housing and policing.

## CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED – SCHOOL SEGREGATION

One of the most serious challenges remains the persistence of school segregation in EU member states with significant Romani populations. The ERRC found it unacceptable that one of the minimum EU targets for 2030 is cutting the proportion of Romani children in segregated primary education by at least half in Member States with a significant Roma population. Over the past 20 years, dozens of rulings in regional and national courts, and a clutch of ECtHR judgments dating back to 2005, have ruled school segregation to be discriminatory and illegal. As the ERRC cautioned, this ‘halfway approach’ to desegregation, has been taken as a signal to do nothing of any substance to desegregate the school systems. The ERRC asserts that 2030 targets for Romani children in all aspects of their lives must be reset, and need to be as ambitious as those for every other child in the European Union. Below is a selection of highlights from the current reporting period.

Ten years after the EU launched infringement procedures against Slovakia, Czech Republic and Hungary for breaching the EU Race Equality Directive, Romani children still face entrenched discrimination in education. A briefing report, [Separate & Unequal: School Segregation Persists for Roma in Slovakia](#) published by Amnesty International and the ERRC in 2025, reveals how segregation is perpetuated by inadequate monitoring, infrastructural and academic inequities, and discriminatory practices. The full report, including recommendations on how these ‘challenges could be effectively addressed’ is available [here](#).

On 28 February 2025, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled that Slovakia discriminated against a Romani pupil who was placed in a special class for children with mild intellectual disabilities. In the case of [SALAY v. SLOVAKIA](#), where the applicant was represented by the ERRC, the court ruled that the pupil received an education which did not offer the necessary guarantees stemming from the positive obligations of the State to undo a history of racial segregation in special education.

In Hungary, following [legal action](#) initiated in 2024 by the ERRC, the ombudsperson confirmed systemic violations of the rights of Romani children in the Bűdi district of Tiszavasvári, Hungary, where Romani children are forced to walk up to 7 kilometres daily, often in harsh weather, to attend school due to the complete lack of transportation. Background to the report and recommendations of the Ombudsperson are available [here](#).

By way of a **positive outcome**, in February 2025, segregated kindergartens in Kalocsa, Hungary have been shut down and measures put in place to ensure integrated education for Romani children following an investigation and legal complaint by the Rosa Parks and Polgár Foundations, with support from the ERRC. The Deputy Commissioner for Fundamental Rights brought a decision against the head of the kindergartens in the city of Kalocsa and the municipality responsible for their administration.

Challenging segregators in the courts remains vital, to reaffirm that racial segregation is illegal and discriminatory, and ERRC’s litigation victories stand as *concrete achievements*. One key factor in these successes is donor funding to cover the costs of litigation. As for **how to effectively meet this challenge**: in the context of ECtHR jurisprudence over the past 15 years, and the EC’s own infringements, the European Commission needs to be more forceful in fulfilling its role as guardian of the treaties to ensure compliance with the RED, when it comes to equal access to quality integration education. The Commission should also provide funding support for strategic litigation and action research by watchdog NGOs to create greater momentum towards ending school segregation in Europe.

## CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED – HOUSING

Severe housing deprivation remains critical. In 2023, [FRA](#), ECRI and the [EU Council Conclusions](#) called for urgent action to ensure equal access for Roma to decent housing, to make use of EU funds to provide all Romani people living in segregated settlements with access to decent housing that is accessible, affordable, environmentally safe, healthy and desegregated. Slovakia and Italy remain especially concerning. In its 2023 conclusions, the [European Committee of Social Rights](#) deemed that the housing situation for Slovak Roma is not in conformity with Article 16 of the Charter. In July 2024, [Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Michael O’Flaherty](#) observed in some locations in Slovakia, a chronic lack access to water, sanitation and electricity: *“Some Roma dwellings are totally unfit for human habitation and located in hazardous locations, at risk of flooding or near toxic waste dumps.”*

More than ten years after Italy promised to overcome ‘the system of the camps’, ERRC monitoring, and reports from the [Roma Civil Monitor](#) and the Council of Europe over the past year, found that forced evictions of Roma in violation of international standards have continued, and as many as 10,000 Roma still reside in formal and informal settlements, which often lack basic amenities and are located in city outskirts with limited access to public transportation.

One **positive outcome** resulted from action taken by the ERRC and the local Stop Ghettos Committee in Italy, with the support of nine MEPs, who called on the European Commission to investigate the planned misuse of €36 million of EU funding to demolish and evict Roma from an existing segregated camp and rehouse them in newly-constructed dwelling units in the exact same location. In March 2025, the project was modified following an intervention by the Commission to provide for the relocation of the families into integrated social housing.

One **promising practice** worthy of note is that of NGO [Associazione 21 Luglio](#) which provided the authorities in the Piedmont town of Asti with costed guidelines for ‘[overcoming the Roma camp](#)’ in Via Guerra, which accommodates 62 adults and 83 minors, including several small children. Representing [21 Luglio](#), the plan, costed at €290,000, would comprise six phases over two years, and an operational team with a full-time social worker and part-time educator, would necessitate the abandonment of ‘the ethnic approach’ for a participatory action *“that benefits everyone, with a strengthening of the already existing services.”*

## CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED – POLICING

Two recent ERRC reports on [policing](#) in nine European countries revealed widespread institutional racism, brutality, and impunity amongst law enforcement concerning crimes against Roma, and demonstrated the extent to which anti-Roma racism is endemic and systemic within the ranks of officers paid to ‘protect and serve’. In November 2023, this evidence was cited by the [PACE Standing Committee](#) whose [motion](#) condemned institutional racism and police brutality which includes *“inhuman and degrading treatment, torture, excessive use of force, and violence resulting in some cases in the victim’s death”*, and stated that antigypsyism is evident in the way Roma are policed and in the *“culture of impunity that still too often prevails for such practices.”* ERRC-related cases concerning police brutality that fell within the reporting period included the historic first instance ruling by the Bratislava IV City Court on 22 July 2024 in a police brutality case brought by Roma against the Slovak Ministry of Interior. The case related to the extreme violence deployed during a mass raid on a Romani community in Vrbnica and the ensuing investigation into allegations of ill treatment and discrimination at hands of the police officers involved. This verdict marked the first time a civil court in Slovakia has found the police guilty of discrimination based on ethnic grounds. Story [here](#).

The ERRC regularly provides submissions and its evidence is cited by UN and Council of Europe bodies. The 2024 [ECRI monitoring report on Italy](#) expressed regret that *“little or no action has been taken over the last few years to ensure better accountability in cases of any racist or LGBTI-phobic abuse committed by state police officers, carabinieri and other law enforcement officials.”* The report criticised the lack of accountability in cases of racist abuse and violence committed by law enforcement, highlighted the extent of routine ethnic profiling, and how such practices erode trust in the police, generating *“a feeling of humiliation and injustice among affected groups and resulting in stigmatisation and alienation.”*

In its 2024 **concluding observations** on Greece, UNCERD recommended that the state conduct prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into all allegations of racial profiling, racially motivated police violence and excessive use of force by law enforcement officials. UNCERD expressed concerns about reports of police violence targeting Roma and non-citizens such as migrants, asylum seekers and refugees; and the lack of detailed information on investigations, prosecutions, convictions and sanctions for such acts. For more, see [here](#).

On the third anniversary in October 2024 of the killing of one 18-year-old Romani youth and the wounding of two others shot by Greek police, **human rights defenders and defence attorneys** for the families issued a formal protest about the lack of any progress with the investigation into the shooting. Three years after the fatal shooting in October 2021, and two more killings by police of Romani youths, this investigation has ‘stagnated’.

On 14 December 2022, 16-year-old Kostas Fragoulis was shot in the head by a police officer during a chase over an unpaid €20 gas station bill near in Thessaloniki. Almost one year later, on 11 November 2023 around midnight, police shot dead 17-year-old Christos Michalopoulos after a car chase in the town of Thebes, north of Attica.

Police violence is symptomatic of a wider crisis of structural racism in the criminal justice system, that allows for recurring abuses of human rights, a lack of accountability and a culture of impunity. The current EU Roma framework has failed to make any discernible impact on the way Roma are policed.

As for ***how to effectively meet this challenge***: The European Commission should provide funding support for strategic litigation and watchdog rights organisations to hold law enforcement to account; the Commission should set minimum human rights compliant standards for the policing of Roma and other racialized minorities, fully promote and instruct member states to adopt the recommendations of the **PACE Standing Committee** ECRI and UNCERD; as well as rigorously monitor progress on policing and access to justice for Roma as a thematic priority up to 2030.

Concerning ***a promising practice***, in May 2024, the ERRC launched the **Roma Justice Project** which calls for an overhaul of criminal legal systems across Europe to deliver justice for Roma. This first-of-its-kind initiative is centred around a web platform that links testimonies and accounts of injustice against Romani individuals with an ever-growing body of evidence that includes research, data and litigation.