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ETUCE's views on the EU post-2020 Roma equality and inclusion policy

(adopted by the ETUCE Bureau on 26 February 2020)

The Commission Work Programme 2020 announces a non-legislative initiative on Roma equality and inclusion for the fourth quarter of 2020. Following the conclusion of the “EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies up to 2020”, the European Commission proposed a [roadmap](#) setting out the EU post-2020 Roma equality and inclusion policy. ETUCE¹ welcomes the initiative to design an EU Framework on Roma Equality and Inclusion Strategies, as well as to review a Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration in the Member States, and wishes to contribute with the point of view of education trade unions as social partners in the education sector.

The European Commission's [Report](#) on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies published last year found that education is the policy area with the highest number of interventions and evaluations. However, the report lists a significant number of challenges that still persist in regard to the inclusion of Roma students and education workers in education systems in Europe, including absenteeism and segregation, early school leaving and transition from primary to secondary school, structural anti-Gypsyism, discrimination and lower employment prospects. The report remarks that among 16 years old Roma children, only 29% have finished primary school and 14% have no school education at all. Meanwhile, 33% of Roma children attend schools where most of the students are Roma. Living in overcrowded housing, in segregated areas or at risk of poverty tends to increase the chances of young Roma leaving school before finishing upper secondary or vocational education. As 80% of Roma are at risk of poverty, addressing poverty is also key to helping Roma achieve better in education.²

The following statement provides ETUCE's views on the situation of Roma students and teachers, academics and other education personnel, and proposes key points to be included in the EU post-2020 Roma equality and inclusion policy:

1. ETUCE member organisations have been raising the issues of early school leaving and segregation among Roma students for many years. In the view of achieving UN [Sustainable Development Goals](#) and implementing the priorities of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) in education and on eliminating poverty, employment, and other key targets, the EU strategy should demand from the EU member states to ensure that all Roma children receive **high quality, inclusive, culturally and socially diverse education**, including through the use of ICT and new technologies so as to avoid 'digital discrimination'.

¹ The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) represents 132 education trade unions and 11 million teachers in 51 country of Europe. ETUCE is a Social Partner in education at the EU level and a European Trade Union Federation within the European Trade Union Confederation. ETUCE is the European Region of Education International, the global federation of education trade unions.

² FRA [report](#) on 'Transition from Education to Employment of Young Roma in Nine EU Member States', July 2018.

2. ETUCE underlines the importance of **measures explicitly targeting Roma students at every educational stage**, with a focus on early-childhood education, including monitoring of the enrolment, attendance and educational outcomes of Roma students. Furthermore, EU Member States should prioritise measures to combat anti-Gypsyism in education by **eliminating any form of school or class segregation of Roma, addressing stereotypes, and fighting hate speech and hate crime**.
3. ETUCE highlights the vital role of education and teachers in breaking down the barriers and discrimination which exclude Roma people from full participation in European societies. Therefore, in order to have a successful inclusion of Roma people in education, teachers, academics and other education personnel need professional support, including **teacher training on inclusive education (including intercultural pedagogy) and the employment of teaching assistants**.
4. **Inclusive educational and whole-school approaches** to learning are crucial for retaining Roma people in education system and combating ethnic discrimination and related segregation. These approaches include project- and problem-based learning, community service learning, providing life-long learning opportunities, as well as integrating modules on Roma history and culture in teaching programmes in mainstream education.
5. It is also crucial to **make space for Roma people themselves to lead on inclusive education**, either through contributing to the design of educational programmes or by training as teachers and teaching assistants.
6. A visible, **long-term political support and sufficient public financing** is required to implement Roma inclusion strategies in education. ETUCE calls for clearer data on public funding in education with a special focus on Roma inclusion, including additional financial and professional support (e.g. covering costs of transportation, school materials, etc.).
7. Socio-economic and other non-educational factors, including **housing, living standards, health and safety, as well as traditional gender roles**, have a strong impact on access and participation in education and labour market of Roma people. Living in overcrowded housing, in segregated areas or at risk of poverty, as well as inaccessible early childhood education, are among key barriers preventing the full inclusion of Roma communities in education systems and labour market in Europe. Therefore, the EU post-2020 Roma equality and inclusion policy have to provide practical and urgent solutions to these challenges, considering that non-discriminatory, quality education and desegregation in education and housing contribute to eliminating the poverty and providing Roma people with attractive job prospects, better job security, benefits and pay.
8. Education trade unions provide the education professional insight and expertise necessary for a successful implementation of national and European level Roma equality and inclusion strategies. It is crucial that governments and education authorities coordinate and discuss these strategies and their implementation in the education sector with education trade unions. The European Commission and Member States should therefore promote **effective social dialogue** on Roma equality and inclusion policies in the education sector and on how to build inclusive education systems with education trade unions.

