



Greek National Commission for Human Rights

RIGHTS OF ROMA IN GREECE

**From fragmented interventions
to a rights-based framework
for equality, inclusion and accountability**

POLICY PAPER
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*This policy paper distils the principal findings and policy recommendations of the
GNCHR Reference Report on the Rights of Roma in Greece (2026)*



The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) is the independent advisory body to the Greek State on matters pertaining to human rights protection and the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI). It was established in accordance with the UN Paris Principles and is governed by Law 4780/2021. Its members are persons appointed by twenty institutions whose activities cover the field of human rights (independent Authorities, universities, third level trade unions, NGOs and research institutions).

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Executive summary

The Roma community in Greece continues to experience persistent and mutually reinforcing inequalities in housing, employment, health, education and access to public services. These inequalities are further compounded by antigypsyism, discrimination, administrative barriers and, in some cases, serious concerns regarding police conduct and effective accountability. The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR), the national human rights institution (NHRI) of Greece, calls for a shift from fragmented interventions towards a coherent, rights-based and measurable public policy framework.

The GNCHR's approach rests on *six interconnected priorities*: adequate housing and access to essential services; effective access to employment and economic empowerment; effective access to health and social protection; equal and inclusive education; intersectional policy; and the systematic prevention of antigypsyism and police violence. These priorities must be implemented together. Housing insecurity affects school attendance and health; educational exclusion limits access to stable employment; unemployment reproduces poverty; and discrimination undermines access to services across all sectors.

The central policy requirement is to ensure that implementation is accompanied by clear accountability. Every measure should have a clear responsible authority, timetable, secured resources and measurable objectives. Roma representatives, mediators and experts must participate meaningfully in policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The GNCHR further proposes a unified structure-process-outcome indicator framework, aligned with the EU Roma Strategic Framework and the work of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, so that progress is assessed by changes in lived conditions rather than by the number of programmes announced or funds absorbed.

Priority actions

- ▶ *Adopt an integrated national social housing approach, with enforceable local ac-*

tion plans, access to water, sanitation and electricity, safeguards against evictions without adequate alternative accommodation, and measures against discrimination in the private rental market.

- ▶ *Move from short-term employment schemes to personalised pathways combining skills, vocational guidance, apprenticeships, formalisation of informal work, employer incentives and sustained support, with particular attention to Roma women and young people.*
- ▶ *Guarantee practical access to public healthcare through strengthened primary care, mobile units, Roma health mediators, preventive programmes, maternal and child health services, mental health support and intercultural training for health professionals.*
- ▶ *Eliminate direct and indirect school segregation, secure participation from early childhood education onwards, prevent early school leaving, strengthen Roma school and cultural mediators, and create flexible pathways for young people aged 16–18 who fall between mainstream education and second-chance structures.*
- ▶ *Mainstream intersectionality across all Roma policies and disaggregate data by gender, age and disability, with targeted measures for Roma women, children, young people and persons with disabilities.*
- ▶ *Integrate specific and measurable anti-gypsyism actions into the National Action Plan against Racism and Intolerance 2026–2029, strengthen independent investigation and accountability for police misconduct, address under-reporting and build safe, accessible complaint channels.*

1. A rights-based policy framework

Greece's obligations towards the Roma community arise from the Greek Constitution, international human rights treaties, the European Convention on Human Rights, EU law and the contemporary European framework for Roma equality, inclusion and participation. Public policy must be judged, however, not only by the existence of formal frameworks but by whether Roma can actually enjoy rights on an equal basis.

Administrative barriers relating to civil status, identification documents and social-security registration must be treated as cross-cutting rights issues because they can obstruct access simultaneously to healthcare, education, employment, benefits and justice.

Participation is a substantive requirement. Policies designed for Roma without Roma risk mis-identifying needs, reproducing stereotypes and failing at implementation. The GNCHR therefore places the participation of Roma communities, representative organisations, women, young people and mediators at the centre of the policy cycle. Participation should extend from needs assessment and programme design to monitoring, evaluation and revision.

2. Adequate housing and access to essential services

Housing is a foundational condition for the exercise of other rights. Inadequate or insecure housing, lack of safe water, sanitation, electricity and waste collection, and spatial segregation directly affect health, school attendance, employment and personal security. The GNCHR calls for a comprehensive national housing strategy that replaces temporary relocation and isolated technical interventions with sustainable, non-segregating solutions.

Forced eviction must be treated as a measure of last resort. Before any removal, authorities

should carry out an individualised assessment, provide prior information and genuine consultation, ensure access to legal assistance, take account of children, older persons and persons with disabilities, and secure suitable alternative accommodation. No eviction should result in homelessness or simply recreate segregation elsewhere.

Rental subsidies can assist integration into the ordinary urban fabric, but subsidies alone are insufficient where Roma encounter discrimination from landlords or neighbours. Housing measures should therefore combine adequate duration and stable funding with social support, mediation, guarantees where appropriate and effective enforcement of equal-treatment rules in the private housing market.

Policy priorities

- ▶ *Develop a comprehensive national social housing framework with specific provision for Roma and mandatory, implementable local action plans.*
- ▶ *Guarantee access to safe water, sanitation, electricity and waste collection as basic conditions of dignified living.*
- ▶ *Establish robust safeguards against eviction without social assessment, due process and adequate alternative accommodation.*
- ▶ *Replace segregating relocation practices with gradual integration into the urban or rural fabric, while respecting family and community ties.*
- ▶ *Strengthen legal aid, social mediation and accompanying services before, during and after housing interventions.*
- ▶ *Monitor housing conditions, settlement changes, evictions, overcrowding and access to infrastructure.*

Core outcomes should include fewer households without basic infrastructure, reduced overcrowding, fewer evictions without adequate protection, increased access to lawful and secure accommodation and demonstrable reduction of residential segregation.

3. Employment and economic empowerment

Employment is both a source of income and a condition of autonomy, social recognition and equal participation. Roma face structural barriers generated by discrimination, educational disadvantage, spatial exclusion, limited formal qualifications and the persistence of informal work. The GNCHR therefore advocates a coherent equal-opportunity and positive-action policy rather than a succession of short-term placements.

Employment policy should combine supply- and demand-side measures. Individualised vocational guidance, skills development and recognition of existing experience should be matched by incentives for employers, anti-discrimination monitoring and support during the transition into work. Public employment services, municipalities, employers, community centres and Roma mediators should cooperate so that job placement is accompanied by preparation, appropriate skills matching and follow-up support.

Particular attention is required for Roma women and young people. Women's employment is affected by multiple discrimination and unequal care responsibilities; young people are exposed to long-term exclusion where school leaving is followed by neither training nor stable work. Childcare, apprenticeships, second-chance education and flexible training pathways are therefore employment measures as much as social or educational measures.

Policy priorities

- ▶ *Create targeted public employment-service pathways combining counselling, training, apprenticeships and sustained job-placement support.*
- ▶ *Use transparent incentives for Roma recruitment in the public and private sectors, accompanied by equal-treatment safeguards.*

- ▶ *Support social enterprises, micro-enterprises, self-employment and access to appropriate microfinance.*
- ▶ *Facilitate transition from informal to formal employment without creating new exclusion through excessive administrative burdens.*
- ▶ *Expand childcare and work-life reconciliation measures, particularly for Roma women.*
- ▶ *Measure employment, unemployment, informal work, income gaps and post-training job retention, disaggregated by gender and age.*

4. Health and social protection

Health inequalities among Roma cannot be separated from the social determinants of health. Poor housing, lack of water and sanitation, poverty, administrative barriers and discrimination in access to services reinforce preventable ill-health. The GNCHR calls for an integrated public-health policy built around prevention, equal access and empowerment.

Primary healthcare should be brought closer to communities through mobile units and strengthened local services, while Roma health mediators should be institutionally embedded as trusted links between communities and the health system. Administrative difficulties concerning social-security registration or documentation should not become *de facto* barriers to necessary healthcare. Preventive programmes should cover vaccination, early diagnosis, maternal and child health, sexual and reproductive health and mental health.

Roma women require specific attention because gender, socioeconomic disadvantage and racial discrimination can overlap. The report identifies the need for targeted information and preventive screening, family-planning and reproductive-health services, psychological support and effective responses to gender-based violence. Services should be accessible, culturally appropriate and designed with the participation of Roma women and mediators.

Policy priorities

- ▶ *Guarantee practical and non-discriminatory access to the National Health System and simplify administrative access barriers.*
- ▶ *Strengthen primary care and mobile health units serving settlements and areas with poor service accessibility.*
- ▶ *Institutionalise and adequately support Roma health mediators.*
- ▶ *Develop sustained vaccination, prevention, maternal and child health, reproductive health and mental-health programmes.*
- ▶ *Train health professionals systematically in intercultural competence, equal treatment and antigypsyism.*
- ▶ *Monitor insurance coverage, access to doctors and services, preventive participation and maternal and child health outcomes.*

5. Equal and inclusive education

Education is a fundamental right and the principal long-term mechanism for breaking inter-generational cycles of poverty, exclusion and discrimination. The GNCHR has repeatedly stressed the need to protect Roma children and to guarantee equal access to quality, inclusive education. Greek and European human-rights standards require not merely school registration, but effective attendance, completion and ending direct or indirect segregation.

The GNCHR calls for a dedicated Roma educational-inclusion axis covering the full pathway from early childhood education to secondary education, vocational training, lifelong learning and transition to employment. Universal participation in preschool education, prevention of early school leaving and elimination of school segregation should be treated as immediate priorities. Cooperation with families is essential and should be supported through sustained aware-

ness and mediation. School and cultural mediators can build trust, facilitate registration, support regular attendance and identify early risks of dropout. Teachers require systematic training in intercultural education, inclusive pedagogy and antigypsyism. Educational materials should reflect Roma history and culture and contribute to a school environment free from stereotypes.

A specific institutional gap concerns young people aged 16–18 who have left compulsory education but cannot readily re-enter mainstream schooling or access second-chance structures. Flexible learning routes should combine general education with vocational orientation, apprenticeships and practical learning. Second Chance Schools ought to be reinforced, while innovative models integrating work-based learning should be assessed for potential adaptation in Greece.

Policy priorities

- ▶ *Secure universal early-childhood participation and systematic attendance throughout compulsory education.*
- ▶ *Prohibit and actively dismantle direct and indirect school segregation, in line with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights.*
- ▶ *Strengthen Roma school and cultural mediators and structured cooperation among schools, families, Community Centres and Roma organisations.*
- ▶ *Create flexible reintegration pathways for 16–18-year-olds and strengthen Second Chance Schools, vocational education and apprenticeships.*
- ▶ *Train teachers in intercultural education, inclusive pedagogy and antigypsyism and develop teaching material on Roma history and culture.*
- ▶ *Track enrolment, attendance, completion, dropout, segregation and transition from education or training to employment.*

6. Intersectionality: making equality policy responsive to diversity

Roma communities are internally diverse. Gender, age, disability, health status, poverty and administrative status can interact to produce forms of exclusion that are not captured by a single-category approach. The GNCHR therefore treats intersectionality as a horizontal principle rather than a separate niche policy.

Roma women and girls may face barriers in education, employment, healthcare, childcare and protection from gender-based violence. Roma persons with disabilities may encounter the combined effects of inaccessible services, poverty and racial discrimination. Children and young people are particularly exposed to the cumulative effects of housing insecurity, educational exclusion and limited access to services. Policy must identify all these combinations explicitly.

Policy priorities

- ▶ *Require relevant data and programme evaluation to be disaggregated, at minimum, by gender, age and disability, with appropriate safeguards.*
- ▶ *Develop targeted empowerment programmes for Roma women and young people and ensure access to education, childcare, legal support and protection from gender-based violence.*
- ▶ *Ensure that Roma persons with disabilities and chronic conditions can access benefits, healthcare, education, employment and community services on an equal basis.*
- ▶ *Measure participation of Roma women, young people and persons with disabilities in local decision-making and policy design.*

Intersectional monitoring should be used not merely to generate statistics, but to identify groups that are not reached by general programmes and to adapt the allocation of resources and the mechanisms for delivering support accordingly.

7. Antigypsyism, racist violence and police accountability

Antigypsyism is a specific, systemic and structural form of racism that reproduces stereotypes, discrimination and social exclusion. It must be addressed horizontally across public policy and not treated solely as an issue of individual prejudice. The GNCHR considers that specific, clearly defined and measurable actions against antigypsyism should be systematically embedded in the National Action Plan against Racism and Intolerance 2026–2029 and coordinated with the National Roma Inclusion Strategy.

Priority should be given to implementation, monitoring and evaluation rather than the proliferation of parallel action plans. Authorities should develop indicators capable of measuring actual impact, involve Roma representative bodies and civil society, and use evidence from independent institutions and mechanisms recording racist violence.

Police conduct is a key factor in shaping public trust in institutions. Law-enforcement operations affecting Roma communities must comply with legality, necessity and proportionality and avoid ethnic profiling or collective treatment of communities as suspect. Police, judicial and administrative officials require continuous training in identifying, investigating and documenting racist motivation.

Complaint-handling and accountability mechanisms must be effective in practice, since low levels of reporting may reflect fear of retaliation, a lack of trust or insufficient awareness of the remedies available. It is therefore essential to provide safe and accessible channels for filing complaints, together with access to legal assistance, mediation and independent investigations. Monitoring should capture not only the number of complaints received, but also their progress and outcomes.

Policy priorities

- ▶ Embed measurable antigypsyism actions in the National Action Plan against Racism and Intolerance and ensure coordination with Roma inclusion policies.
- ▶ Train police, judicial and administrative officials in racist-motive identification, non-discrimination and the prevention of racial profiling.
- ▶ Ensure prompt, effective and independent investigation of allegations of racist violence and police misconduct.
- ▶ Address under-reporting through safe complaint channels, legal aid, community information and mediation.
- ▶ Systematically collect, analyse and publish data on racist incidents, police misconduct, investigations and outcomes.
- ▶ Develop sustained public-awareness and media initiatives against stereotypes, stigmatising representations and hate speech.

8. Implementation, indicators and institutional accountability

The effectiveness of Roma policy will depend on whether Greece can connect legal commitments, budgets, institutions and local delivery to measurable improvements in everyday life. The GNCHR therefore recommends that every thematic priority be accompanied by a set of structure, process and outcome indicators.

A common monitoring architecture

- ▶ *Structure: legal guarantees, responsible institutions, national and local strategies,*

anti-discrimination safeguards and formal mediation mechanisms.

- ▶ *Process: budget allocations, geographic coverage, number of active programmes, trained professionals, mediators, beneficiaries, complaints handled and inter-agency coordination.*
- ▶ *Outcome: changes in housing security and infrastructure, employment and income, healthcare access and prevention, school attendance and completion, experiences of discrimination, and trust in institutions.*

Indicators should be comparable over time, disaggregated where necessary to reveal intersectional inequalities. Annual monitoring should identify delays, gaps and unintended effects while periodic review should permit revision of targets and methods.

Institutional responsibilities

A coherent policy requires clear allocation of responsibility across central government, municipalities, public employment and health services, schools, law-enforcement bodies and independent institutions. Coordination must not dilute accountability: each action should identify the authority responsible for delivery, the funding source, the timetable and the expected result. Local authorities require adequate capacity and resources, but national authorities must ensure that fundamental rights do not depend on municipal willingness alone.

The GNCHR will continue to monitor developments, communicate findings to national, European and international bodies, and assess progress on its recommendations. Its role as Greece's NHRI, together with its pluralistic composition and engagement with Roma representation and civil society, enables it to contribute to a continuing cycle of evidence, dialogue and accountability.

Conclusion: from programmes to substantive equality

The GNCHR calls for a durable shift in public policy: from formal availability of services to effective access; from consultation to meaningful Roma participation; and from counting activities to measuring outcomes. Housing, employment, health and education should be understood as mutually reinforcing rights, while intersectionality and the fight against antigypsyism should operate across every sector.

The ultimate benchmark is substantive equality: whether Roma children can attend inclusive schools, whether families can live in safe housing with basic services, whether women and young

people can access stable work and healthcare, whether discrimination can be reported without fear, and whether public authorities are trusted because rights are protected effectively and violations are investigated.

Source note

Prepared on the basis of the Greek National Commission for Human Rights, Reference Report on the Rights of Roma in Greece (2026), including its thematic priorities, field and stakeholder findings, recommendations and proposed structure-process-outcome indicators.



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