

Joint civil society Statement - July 2025

Bulgaria's 2025 Voluntary National Review

Bulgaria's 2025 Voluntary National Review highlights progress on poverty reduction, stakeholder inclusion, and institutional transparency. However, Roma communities in Bulgaria continue to face significant barriers across SDGs.

Issues such as segregated settlements, limited access to infrastructure, antigypsyism, work and descent-based discrimination, racialized poverty, and high unemployment persist.

A notable example of ongoing violations of housing rights and spatial discrimination is the forced evictions in the "Sugar Factory" (Zaharna Fabrika¹)—referenced by European institutions—underscore the need for inclusive housing policy.

Romani women remain significantly underrepresented in both gender and Roma policy discussions. Their invisibility weakens SDG 5 implementation, as Romani women face significantly higher poverty rates and persistent gender gaps in employment and discrimination.²

The effective participation of Roma individuals in public and political life remains limited.³ The protection and promotion of Roma rights were largely absent from campaign priorities across the political spectrum.⁴

Roma-specific indicators and direct consultation mechanisms are essential.

We urge the Bulgarian government to:

- Enact anti-discrimination legislation, addressing anti-gypsyism and discrimination based on work and descent.
- Ensure Roma-led civil society organizations are consulted in the compilation of the government VNR report, SDG monitoring and resource allocation.
- Collect ethical disaggregated data on Roma and ensure upcoming census including a category to declare Roma self-identification in each and every survey or questionnaire.⁵
- End school segregation of Roma children and enhance Romani adult participation in lifelong learning.

¹ [Bulgaria: Human Rights Commissioner calls for immediate action for Roma made homeless by the 'Sugar Factory' demolition - European Roma Rights Centre](#)

² See [Systemic Discrimination and Resilience: Roma Women's Fight for Justice in Bulgaria](#)

³ Council of Europe, Observation of the early parliamentary elections in Bulgaria (9 June and 27 October 2024), Election observation report | Doc. 16077 |

⁴ According to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODHIR)

⁵ Collectively referred to as 'Roma' by the Council of Europe (despite encompassing multiple ethnic groups).

- Secure housing rights and immediately halt forced evictions of Romani people in Bulgaria.
- Integrate Romani women into national strategies, increase their access to the labor market, and provide government support for their upskilling.
- Strengthen the alignment between the [NSRBIR] - Roma strategy 2021-2030 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level.
- Offer the possibility of having Romani language lessons in schools.⁶

We thank you!

[Endorsed by:

Members of the Roma Community in Bulgaria
The World Roma Federation
European Roma Grassroots Organization Network
Stakeholder Group on Communities Discriminated Based on Work and Descent.]

⁶ There are no actual Roma classes nor Roma teaching experts in 2025:
<https://news.bg/education/mon-ne-obuchava-pedagozi-na-romski-ezik.html>,
<https://e-learn.mon.bg/public/study-resources?selectedYear=all&selectedArea=all&selectedCategories=b7dfed75-52e2-4358-85f3-1edb391a97f3,bf63c126-b956-4dbd-9e19-21e47be7698d,5a7fd279-5b83-45a8-80e7-09843b5f997a&selectedSubject=19cf194b-509b-454e-aed0-27babfff71c5>