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PUSHED TO THE WASTELANDS

Environmental racism against
Roma communities in Central
and Eastern Europe



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CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 4 |
| 2 INTRODUCTION | 6 |
| 2.1 What is the problem? | 6 |
| 2.2 What is environmental justice? | 7 |
| 2.3 What is antigypsyism and how does it relate to environmental racism? | 9 |
| 2.4 Why this report? | 10 |
| 2.5 Why is this relevant for EU policy making? | 11 |
| 3 THE RESEARCH PROCESS | 16 |
| 3.1 Methodology | 16 |
| 3.2 Literature review | 18 |
| 4 ANALYSIS OF CASES | 19 |
| 4.1 Map of environmental racism against Roma | 19 |
| 4.2 Cut off: Access denied to fundamental environmental services | 22 |
| 4.3 Put in danger: exposure to environmentally degraded, polluted or hazardous sites | 24 |
| 4.4 Pushed aside: forced evictions and displacement | 25 |
| 4.5 Negative health impacts | 26 |
| 4.6 Responses to environmental conflict | 27 |
| 5 EXAMPLE CASES | 28 |
| 6 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS | 34 |
| 7 REFERENCES | 36 |

FIGURES

| | |
|---|-----------|
| FIGURE 1 Type of environmental conflict per number of identified cases | 20 |
| FIGURE 2 Conflict subcategories identified within the 32 cases | 21 |
| FIGURE 3 Health-related impacts that have been reported in relationship to the 32 analysed cases | 26 |

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Roma communities in Central and Eastern Europe often live and work in poor environments. They are regularly excluded from basic environmental services, such as the supply of drinking water, adequate sanitation, and waste management. They are disproportionately affected by environmental burdens, such as pollution and environmental degradation stemming from waste dumps and landfills, contaminated sites or dirty industries. The consequences are devastating health impacts ranging from infectious diseases to mental health issues.

Unequal exposure to environmental burdens is one of many dimensions of antigypsyism, that is, the racially motivated discrimination and exclusion of persons stigmatised as 'gypsies' in public perceptions. This report shows that environmental racism against Roma communities is a structural and widespread problem in the countries researched in the EU and its immediate neighbourhood. Spatial segregation plays a decisive role in enabling environmental racism. It often coincides with less favourable environmental conditions. The majority of Roma communities in Central and Eastern Europe live in segregated settlements on the outskirts of smaller towns, isolated villages, or urban or semi-urban ghettos that are regularly deprived of basic environmental necessities and are more prone to environmental hazards.

The 32 cases identified and analysed by this report directly affect around 154,000 people living in Roma communities. Most situations are cases of discrimination regarding water and waste management and access to related infrastructure. In smaller numbers, cases include conflicts around industrial sites, conflicts over land, as well as development projects linked to tourism or environmental protection.

Based on the analysis of researched cases, this report defines three widespread situations of environmental racism. In one particular location, aspects of all three categories may appear together or one as the consequence of another:

CUT OFF

Roma communities are disconnected or not provided with public environmental services. For instance, they are denied or limited in access to clean and safe water, adequate sanitation and/or waste collection, while neighbouring areas receive these environmental services.

PUT IN DANGER

Roma communities have no other choice but to live and/or work in environmentally degraded and polluted sites including landfills, contaminated industrial sites such as mining complexes or smelters, or in areas prone to environmental hazards such as floods.

PUSHED ASIDE

Roma communities fall victim to forced evictions from land and water resources or other locations with high economic value to make place, for instance, for new housing or road projects, tourism facilities or for nature protection measures.

This is a matter of environmental justice. The Roma communities affected by discriminatory patterns are often denied access to information and the right to participate in decision-making in environmental matters that impact their lives. There is very little public concern over unequal environmental burden-sharing across the EU and in candidate countries. European policymaking does so far not adequately address the strong correlation between the location of environmental burdens, the lack of environmental services and the ethnic background of the most impacted residents.

Environmental racism against Roma communities is of particular relevance for policymakers in the EU, member states and candidate countries given that it raises concerns around fundamental and human rights. Environmental racism also compromises the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across the EU and neighbouring countries. Moreover, situations of environmental discrimination are often linked to breaches of environmental rights enshrined in the Aarhus Convention to which the EU and all its member states promised to adhere. European and national

environmental regulation does also not equally benefit all parts of society, that is, situations of environmental discrimination are often a matter of weak and unequal implementation and enforcement of environmental law.

The EU, its member states and candidate countries, need to address environmental racism against Roma communities. This report strongly recommends integrating measures to ensure environmental justice in all policies aiming at Roma inclusion. Existing environmental law needs to be implemented and enforced equally for everyone, and environmental rights have to be granted to all without any distinction made based on ethnic and social identity.

The EU's post-2020 framework for Roma integration policies has to combat antigypsyism in all its forms and manifestations including through strong legislative measures while recognizing

environmental discrimination as a specific manifestation of antigypsyism. It needs to lead to a comprehensive and binding EU Strategy for Roma Inclusion that includes candidate countries on equal footing. It should introduce concrete minimum standards and ambitious targets and common monitoring at the EU level, including on environmental justice matters.

Environmental justice needs to be integrated as a stand-alone, substantive thematic area in the post-2020 framework. This new thematic area should address the different forms of environmental discrimination such as the systematic denial of environmental services, communities forced to live and work in environmentally degraded, polluted or contaminated areas or in areas prone to environmental hazards, such as floods, the problem of forced evictions to less favourable environments, as well as poor healthcare.



Source: Cenk (stock.adobe.com)

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 What is the problem?

This report focuses on environmental racism against Roma communities in Central and Eastern Europe. It shows that environmental burdens are not equally distributed, and that ethnicity and class are decisive factors when looking at the exposure to environmental health risks. It illustrates how environmental racism against Roma communities is structural and interlinked with other dimensions of racially motivated discrimination and exclusion.

Between 10 and 12 million Roma live in Europe, around 6 million of whom are in the EU, forming the region's largest ethnic minority. Roma communities have historically experienced social, economic, political and cultural exclusion, spatial segregation and discrimination, but also racially motivated violence such as hate speech and crime, forced evictions, cultural assimilation, coerced sterilisation, and genocide. Long-standing exclusion and discrimination have resulted in wide-spread poverty, unemployment, lack of education, poor health, ghettoisation and exposure to environmental burdens – all of which persist in many European Union member states, as well as candidate and potential candidate countries. Antigypsyism occurs systematically across the region, from poorer to more prosperous countries, and regularly manifests itself in multiple forms of discrimination.

While some progress has been achieved in recent years, not least through EU funding of anti-discrimination initiatives and the European Commission's support for member states implementing national Roma integration strategies, many Roma still live in "overwhelmingly poor conditions at the margins of society, and face extreme levels of social exclusion".¹ The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) found that 80% of Roma it surveyed live at risk of poverty. FRA has also shown that prejudice and discrimination affect large proportions of Roma living in member states.²

The majority of Roma communities, in particular in Central and Eastern Europe, live in segregated settlements. Spatial segregation occurs when Roma communities are pushed to the outskirts of smaller towns, isolated villages, or urban or semi-urban ghettos. These settlements may be located in close vicinity to neighbourhoods inhabited by the majority population, or they may be separated by natural or artificial borders, such as a creek, a railway line, or a wall built for that purpose. In other cases, Roma settlements are located at a longer distance from other villages and towns. Spatial segregation often coincides with less favourable environmental conditions. Tamara Steger and Richard Filčák, amongst the research pioneers

in this field, have shown that many members of Roma communities left the cities after they had lost their jobs in the political and economic transition of 1989/1990 and moved to squalid villages in remote rural areas. Within towns, Roma communities have regularly been evicted from more central areas towards ghettos in the periphery.³ It is these segregated Roma communities that are regularly deprived of basic environmental necessities, including access to potable water, adequate sanitation and waste management.

Every third Roma person in the EU lives without tap water at home.⁴ Beyond being disconnected from public environmental services, many communities are disproportionately exposed to environmental degradation and pollution stemming from waste dumps and landfills, contaminated sites, or dirty industries. Other Roma settlements are exposed to environmental hazards such as flooding. Roma communities are regularly evicted to make place for new projects, from housing to touristic infrastructure, and are pushed to less favourable environments, to the wastelands. Harper et al. argue that "in the case of Roma in CEE [Central and Eastern Europe], spaces inhabited by low-income Roma have come to be 'racialised' during the post-socialist era, intensifying patterns of environmental exclusion along ethnic lines".

Exposure to poor environments impacts people's health. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has shown that nearly one fourth of all deaths globally are linked to environmental risks.⁶ Research on precarious and marginalised Roma communities has shown that **poor social and environmental living conditions often have devastating health impacts.**⁷

This makes Roma communities particularly vulnerable to public health crises, such as the emerging COVID-19 pandemic. Not only are Roma communities more susceptible to disease, they also have less access to healthcare than the majority population. In addition, marginalised Roma communities are made even more vulnerable to COVID-19 due to the shortage of running potable water, poor access to housing, overcrowding and substandard living conditions. Although at the

1 See <https://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/roma>.

2 FRA, 2016.

3 Steger and Filčák, 2008.

4 FRA, 2016.

5 Harper et al., 2009.

6 WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2008.

7 Hanaček, Demaria & Martinez-Alier, 2019.

SLOVAKIA

According to the 2019 Roma Atlas,⁸ around 440,000 Roma live in Slovakia, 8% of the total population. Most Roma live in the Prešov, Košice and Banská Bystrica regions. The Roma Atlas reveals that less than half of Slovak Roma live in integrated areas, whereas more than 95,000 reside on the outskirts of municipalities, 74,000 in segregated settlements, and roughly 46,000 in ghettos on the territory of towns or villages. In 2012, research identified 218 isolated settlements.⁹ While progress has been made in recent years, only 61% of those living in the 100 biggest Roma communities have access to potable water in their homes. The Atlas shows that 149 Roma settlements are entirely segregated from the majority population. These informal settlements are located on the outskirts or outside the limits of municipalities and towns and are often cut off from the public water supply. The Regional Office of Public Health in 2008 reported that the life expectancy of Roma is estimated to be 10-15 years lower than that of the overall population.¹⁰

time of publication the pandemic was still in its early days, some troubling examples of anti-Roma discrimination have already appeared. In Bulgaria, for example, authorities have imposed special measures on Roma communities, including checkpoints outside Roma ghettos, further isolating these already marginalised communities.

While numerous Roma communities suffer from the effects of environmental racism, including negative health impact, lower quality of life in polluted environments, or lack of access to green or natural spaces, Harper et al. have pointed out that the Roma communities themselves are often perceived as environmentally problematic. They argue that Roma communities in Hungary, despite general acknowledgement of structural inequalities and neediness, have been described as lacking environmental awareness.⁸ Filčák described a situation in Slovakia, where Roma communities collect mushrooms and berries in the forest, sometimes illegally harvesting on private or public land, and were publicly criticised for taking away feed from wild bears.⁹ This report at hand argues that environmental degradation in and around Roma settlements is not a result of poverty, but that environmental inequalities are at the root of exclusion and may even deepen social inequalities and poverty.

2.2 What is environmental justice?

Environmental justice relates to how certain communities and groups, including people of colour, ethnic minorities, indigenous groups or low-income groups, are disproportionately affected by environmental burdens, have less access to environmental resources and services, and/or are discriminated against in their right to information, to participation in decision-making and to access to justice in environmental matters. Environmental injustices are regularly associated with health risks and negative consequences for wellbeing.

For this report we refer to Filčák and Steger's definition of environmental justice:

[It is] the fair treatment of people regardless of ethnic origin or class in the distribution of negative environmental consequences from development plans and policies, industrial operations, or natural disasters and as fair access to natural resources and a clean environment. Environmental justice is also the recognition and involvement of stakeholders regardless of their economic status or ethnicity in development, implementation, and enforcement of policies, programs, and projects related to the distribution of environmental benefits and harm.¹³

In the 1980s, growing concern over such unequal environmental burdens led to the emergence of a grassroots civil rights campaign for environmental justice in the United States. In 1991, the First National People of Colour Environmental Leadership Summit adopted the 17 principles of Environmental Justice.¹⁴ Robert D. Bullard, often named the "father of environmental justice" in America, has argued that the problem is, of course, much older, but that the exposure to environmental degradation was previously framed as a social issue before the concept of environmental justice was developed. He showed that the neglect of waste collection, lack of proper sanitation services and sewers in African American neighbourhoods was already a public issue in the 1960s; however, it was not perceived as a problem of environmental discrimination.¹⁵ Meanwhile, decades of research in the US have documented a strong correlation between the location of environmental burdens or the lack of

8 Harper et al., 2009.

9 Filčák, 2012.

10 WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2008.

11 Harper et al., 2009.

12 Filčák, 2012.

13 Steger und Filčák, 2008.

14 See <https://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html>.

15 Bullard, 1993.

HUNGARY

According to a survey by the University of Debrecen, the number of Hungarian Roma is estimated to be around 876,000, close to 9% of the total population. The Hungarian Roma population is diverse, with different linguistic groups that self-identify as Hungarian, Roma, Béas or other.¹⁶ According to a 2003 study, 72% of Roma families lived segregated from the majority population: 42% on the outskirts of town, 8% in separate settlements outside or far from towns and 22% in inner-city ghettos.¹⁷ Many Roma communities live in the Eastern and North-Eastern regions of the country. Another study identified 758 segregated settlements.¹⁸ Data suggests that Roma men have a life expectancy of approximately 10 years lower and Roma women of approximately 18 years lower than non-Roma Hungarians.¹⁹

environmental services and the racial and ethnic background of the most impacted residents.²⁰

Bullard has argued that spatial segregation and environmental injustice are closely linked: African Americans, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, Latinos and Asian Americans often live apart from white Americans, be it in urban ghettos, rural poverty pockets or on reservations. He also stressed that in order to overcome environmental injustice, decision-making bodies need to reflect the diversity of a society: “The exclusion of significant segments of the population has biased environmental decision-making in favour of white middle-class communities” and “the ultimate goal of any inclusion strategy should be to democratise environmental decision-making and empower disenfranchised people to speak and act for themselves”.²¹ The concept of environmental justice, in Bullard’s conception, unites environmentalism with social justice.²²

Beyond the debates around environmental justice in America, communities around the world are struggling to defend their land, air, water, forests and their livelihoods from damaging projects and extractive activities, including mining and landfills. In many areas around the world, it is often the poorest and most marginalised households who have contributed the least to global pollution who are the most exposed to environmental degradation and pollution. Living in poorly ventilated homes or close to highly air polluted urban areas increases the risk of developing chronic and other respiratory diseases. The poorest members of our society are also more vulnerable to environmental dangers and disasters, such as floods, droughts and violent storms, which can push and even lock them into extreme poverty. Environmental inequalities can, therefore, lead to the deepening of social inequalities. Growing environmental injustices from mining to waste dumping have triggered the creation of a global movement for environmental justice. These movements are not only about a fair distribution of environmental hazards, but also social inclusion, participation in decision-making, and recognition.²³

‘Environmentalism of the poor’, a concept coined by Joan Martínez-Alier, refers to the movements led by impoverished communities caused by the unequal distribution of environmental benefits and burdens from economic growth. The resistance of these communities is often not recognised as a global movement, but rather as a struggle for livelihood and traditional community ownership structures. Local protests and campaigns against urban expansion, mining and oil extraction projects are common examples of this environmentalism of the poor.²⁴ The concept also contradicts commonly held views that poverty causes environmental degradation, a narrative that we have seen in the case of Roma communities, too. It argues that the root causes are injustice, exclusion and discrimination.

In Europe, the study and acknowledgment of environmental justice and how minorities and low-income groups are disproportionately affected by environmental burdens has developed at a slower pace. A 2018 report published by the European Environmental Agency (EEA) drew attention to the close links between social and environmental problems and their impact on health. While the report is an important reference for environmental justice discourse in the EU, it does not assess how ethnic minorities, such as the Roma, are disproportionately affected by environmental burdens. It focuses on discrimination based on levels of income, unemployment, education and age across Europe.²⁵ In recent years, interest in and research on environmental justice in Central and Eastern Europe with a focus on Roma communities has grown and has been able to show that racism plays a role in the distribution of environmental harms and benefits.²⁶

16 Pásztor et. al 2016.

17 Kemény and Janky, 2005.

18 Kósa, Daragó and Ádány, 2011.

19 Eduinvest, 2009

20 See, amongst others, Bowen and Wells, 2002; Elliot, Wang, Lowe and Kleindorfer, 2004.

21 Bullard, 1993.

22 Ibid.

23 Schlossberg, 2001.

24 Martínez-Alier, 2002.

25 EEA, 2018.

26 Filčák, 2007, Steger et al., 2007.

BULGARIA

Estimates from the Council of Europe state that 750,000 Roma live in Bulgaria, around 10% of the total population.²⁷ According to Minority Rights Group International, more than half of the Roma population “live in ghettoized neighbourhoods” on city outskirts, with most others living in “isolated villages” across the country. Only a small minority of Roma live integrated with other segments of the population.²⁸ Amnesty International found that more than 70% of urban Roma live in segregated areas.²⁹ About 33% of Bulgarian Roma, compared to 5% of non-Roma, live in absolute poverty.³⁰ According to other research, 89% of Bulgarian Roma do not have direct access to safe water.³¹ Studies on access to health services show that Roma often do not have health insurance (45–48% are insured compared to 85% of the general population) which is linked to widespread unemployment amongst Roma and the difficulty they have in paying their contributions.³² Roma typically live further from health facilities than the general population.³³ Demographic profile data indicate lower life expectancy.³⁴ On average, Roma are more likely to live 10 years less than the majority population,³⁵ a problem linked to higher health risks due to poor living conditions, general poor health and diet, as well as a higher risk of contracting non-communicable diseases.³⁶

2.3 What is antigypsyism and how does it relate to environmental racism?

“Antigypsyism is the specific racism towards Roma, Sinti, Travellers and others who are stigmatized as ‘gypsies’ in the public imagination,” according to the working definition developed by the Alliance against Antigypsyism. It goes beyond discriminatory expressions, stereotypes and hate speech against Roma to encompass underlying structures and less visible, harmful practices.³⁷

This definition of antigypsyism implies that the majority population believes in the existence of a homogenous ethnic group of ‘Roma’ or ‘Gypsies’. In reality, people categorised by society in this way (or similar generalising terms that exist in different European languages) identify with diverse groups, such as Sinti, Kale, Gitano, Béas and others, and may not at all self-identify as ‘Roma’, or may primarily identify with their home countries (Hungarians, Bulgarians, Germans, etc.). This report uses the term “Roma” without the intention to feed into the homogenisation of different identities and socioeconomic realities. Rather, we use it to show how different communities who are considered ‘Roma’ or ‘gypsy’ by the majority population are similarly affected by recurring patterns of environmental racism. While these groups may be very different in terms of culture, language, history or geographic location, they share the experience of racial segregation and discrimination.

Environmental racism is a term coined in the environmental justice movement and describes situations in which certain groups are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation and a lack of environmental services linked to underlying racially motivated discrimination and exclusion. The effects are negative health impacts, a lower quality of life, and a further deepening of existing inequalities.

In the context of this report, environmental racism against Roma communities is understood as one manifestation of antigypsyism, that is, situations in which members of Roma or other communities who are stigmatized as ‘gypsies’ are disproportionately affected by environmental burdens and/or are denied equal access to environmental resources and services.

27 See https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-and-eu/roma-integration-eu-country/roma-integration-bulgaria_en.

28 MRG, 2015.

29 Amnesty International, 2014.

30 EC/UNDP/WB, 2011.

31 Kósa, Daragó and Ádány, 2011.

32 UNDP/WB/EC, FRA, UNDP/WB/EC Regional Survey 2011 and FRA Pilot Survey 2011, 2012.

33 Eurofound, Living Conditions of the Roma: Substandard housing and health, 2012.

34 European Commission, Roma Health Report, 2014.

35 Eduinvest, 2009.

36 EPHA, 2019.

37 Alliance against Antigypsyism, 2016.

ROMANIA

Around 1.85 million Roma live in Romania, more than 8% of the total population.³⁸ According to Amnesty International, lack of political will and action has resulted in the wide-scale segregation of Roma communities.³⁹ The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) reports that “Roma frequently live in isolated locations [...] and face difficulties accessing alternative housing, including social housing.”⁴⁰ Research has shown that around half of Romanian Roma live close to waste dumps.⁴¹ Health statistics estimate a 10 year difference in life expectancy between Roma (64 years) and non-Roma (74 years), as well as a tenfold higher vulnerability to tuberculosis.⁴² A recent report by the Council of Europe’s Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) found that hate speech in public discourse and on the internet has become a widespread problem, mainly targeting Roma, the Hungarian minority, LGBT people and the Jewish community. Violent attacks occur frequently. The ECRI report also highlights cases of racial discrimination and racial profiling against Roma without any attempt to investigate those cases by independent bodies.⁴³

2.4 Why this report?

While research around the world has shown that environmental burdens and negative health impacts disproportionately affect indigenous people, ethnic minorities and low-income groups, there is little awareness of environmental justice in Europe. The issue has received only marginal attention from policymakers and institutions. The 2018 FRA report ‘A persisting concern: antigypsyism as a barrier to Roma inclusion’ does not identify environmental racism as one significant aspect of antigypsyism. The 2019 FRA report briefly touches on environmental discrimination in general without referring to the environmental injustices faced by Roma communities.

When looking at the civil society movement to protect the environment, the American environmental sociologist and environmental justice activist Dorceta Taylor has argued that the movement in the US has operated with very little minority participation. She stressed that human welfare concerns arising from environmental degradation and exposure to pollution have not been equally raised for everyone.⁴⁴ In Europe, researchers have started to pay attention to environmental racism against Roma, and cases have been made public and opposed by Roma rights groups and human rights organisations. However, the mainstream environmental

movement in Europe is only starting to look into questions of environmental racism against Roma communities. So far, very few major environmental organisations in Europe have tackled environmental racism against Roma communities. This report strives to contribute to a more inclusive approach.

The main objectives of this report therefore are to:

- **Create a stronger knowledge base of environmental racism in Europe by mapping and analysing situations of environmental injustice faced by Roma communities and how these affect their right to health, to adequate housing and to safe drinking water and sanitation;**
- **Raise awareness of environmental racism as one dimension of antigypsyism;**
- **Make initial policy recommendations to push for policy change at EU and member state level;**
- **Support Roma environmental justice activists and trigger collaboration with the mainstream environmental movement.**

38 See https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-and-eu/roma-integration-eu-country/roma-integration-romania_en.

39 Amnesty International, 2015.

40 ERRC, 2014 as cited in <https://www.refworld.org/docid/563c58104.html>.

41 Steger, 2007.

42 Cace, Toader & Vizireanu, 2013, Berger et al, 2010.

43 ECRI, 2019.

44 Taylor, 1993.

NORTH MACEDONIA

According to Council of Europe estimates, the number of Roma in North Macedonia is around 197,000⁴⁵ which represents around 9.6% of the total population.⁴⁶ Most Roma also belong to a religious minority practising Islam.⁴⁷ The Roma population is dispersed throughout the country with a large concentration in the municipality of Šuto Orizari in Skopje.⁴⁸ The area is considered a ghetto with no significant employment base or tax revenues.⁴⁹ Scientific research has covered several cases in which Roma were forcibly evicted to live near heavily polluted industrial sites.⁵⁰ Discrimination and exclusion are widespread and include discrimination by officials when obtaining documents or police abuse.⁵¹

2.5 Why is this relevant for EU policy making?

Environmental racism against Roma communities in Europe has received very little attention in policy making, in the implementation and enforcement of environmental law, in environmental decision-making and participation, as well as in public spending on environmental protection or environmental services. Different areas of European legislation and policies have a direct link to the issue of environmental justice and Roma communities, and could be better used in the future in order to improve the situation.

Fundamental and human rights

Environmental racism against Roma communities amounts to breaches of internationally recognised human rights. Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights guarantees an adequate standard of living including decent housing, adequate basic infrastructure and the right to water. Article 12 enshrines the right to health. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union in Article 35 guarantees high levels of human health protection and Article 37 high levels of environmental protection through Union policies. The right to a healthy environment is enshrined in constitutions and other laws across EU member states.



Garbage container excluded from the public garbage collection in Kochani, North Macedonia. Source: ejatlas.org

45 Refers to mean estimates.

46 Robayo-Abril and Millan, 2019.

47 See <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/roma-11/>.

48 Ibid.

49 See <https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/roma-political-life-macedonia-pride-and-prejudice>.

50 Steger and Filčák, 2008.

51 See <https://minorityrights.org/minorities/roma-11/>.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In 2015, the EU committed to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals and the associated 2030 Agenda. The slow progress in tackling the many dimensions of exclusion faced by Roma communities, in particular the non-acknowledgement of environmental injustices, undermines the EU's and member states' efforts in achieving the SDGs.

The EU is likely to fail on SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), especially target 3.9 which aims to substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination by 2030. In addition, SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) cannot be met by the EU and member states unless we achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all (target 6.1), ensure access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all (target 6.2), improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimising release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater (target 6.3), and strengthening the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation (6.B). With regards to SDG 10 (Reducing Inequalities), the EU is likely to fail on several targets. Europe needs to promote the

inclusion of all, irrespective of race, ethnicity and status (target 10.2). Inequalities must be reduced at the stage of outcome (target 10.3), that is, the EU and member states must eliminate discriminatory laws, but also the unequal implementation and enforcement of laws and discriminatory practices that persist despite appropriate legislation. SDG 11 relates to sustainable cities and communities. Regarding the situation of the Roma, the EU and member states need to step up their action to ensure access for all to adequate, safe and affordable housing and basic services and upgrade slums (target 11.1), as well as universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces (target 11.7). Regarding SDG 13 (Climate Action), Roma communities need to see their resilience strengthened when it comes to climate-related hazards and natural disasters (target 13.1). On SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), Europe still needs to ensure equal access to justice for all (target 16.3), effective, accountable and transparent institutions (16.6), responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (16.7), public access to information (16.11) and must promote and enforce non-discriminatory laws and policies for sustainable development (16.B).



Environmental rights and the Aarhus Convention

The EU is a party to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention), a key instrument in protecting environmental rights. It provides for the right of everyone to receive environmental information that is held by public authorities (access to environmental information) including information on the state of the environment, on policies or measures taken, or on the state of human health and safety. It guarantees the right to public participation in environmental decision-making. In addition, it grants the right to review procedures to challenge public decisions that have been made without respecting the two aforementioned rights or environmental laws in general ("access to justice"). As highlighted by the 2019 FRA Report, a question of particular relevance for sustainable development and the implementation of SDG 16 is access to justice in environmental matters.⁵²

Currently, there is hardly any assessment in how far Roma communities across the EU have equal access to information, are equally granted the right to participation in environmental decision-making and can access courts in environmental matters. For example, research on the accessibility of the justice system in Albania based on the perceptions of 360 individuals showed that Roma have been reluctant to seek access to the legal system due to a low level of information about it, long bureaucratic procedures, corruption, discrimination and the poor quality of free legal aid for the poor.⁵³ The identified patterns of environmental injustice suggest that Roma communities may regularly not enjoy their full procedural and environmental rights, are often marginalised in environmental decision-making while seldomly seeking justice through the courts.

Implementation of EU environmental law

Environmental regulation does not equally benefit all parts of society. The question why environmental laws are better enforced for some, but not for others, and whether the European institutions and member states are doing enough to adequately protect Roma communities from pollution and from the exposure to environmental degradation needs more attention. An assessment of how equally European environmental laws are enforced, would be valuable. Legislation that could benefit from such evaluation includes the EU Drinking Water Directive, the Water Framework Directive, the Industrial Emissions Directive or the Ambient Air Quality Directive, the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive and the SSEA Directive as well as the EU Waste Framework Directive.

⁵² FRA, 2019.

⁵³ Mece, 2016.

EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies

Questions of environmental justice involving Roma communities are not well covered by existing policies focusing on Roma inclusion. The European Commission's 2010 Communication on the social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe does not address environmental justice or any of its particular aspects, such as poor access to water and adequate sanitation, exposure to pollution and environmental health risks.⁵⁴ The Communication on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 defines access to education, employment, healthcare and housing as the main focuses of national Roma integration strategies. The EU's main instrument to fight the exclusion of the Roma does not show a particular concern for environmental injustice. When addressing the overall poor health of Roma communities, the Communication mentions poor living conditions and higher health risks without naming environmental degradation and exposure to pollution or higher environmental health risks. The only aspect of environmental justice mentioned in the Communication is inadequate access to public utilities, such as water, and its negative health impacts.

In 2012, the Commission issued a Communication assessing the National Roma Integration Strategies⁵⁵ which again does not explicitly touch upon environmental justice questions. With regards to health concerns, it focuses more on access to health services and does not give much attention to question of higher health risks, including environmental health risks. The only, very broad recommendation, is to improve living conditions and to focus on segregated settlements. With regards to access to housing, the question of access to water and adequate sanitation is not expressly mentioned. It

includes a general recommendation for member states to promote desegregation and to pay special attention to public utilities.⁵⁶

The monitoring system linked to the EU Framework does cover environmental injustices to a certain degree. The 2016 survey conducted by the Fundamental Rights Agency on discrimination against minorities included a question on pollution and environmental problems (such as dust, smoke or polluted water). The survey also obtained data on access to tap water in homes, as well as on problems with paying the utility bills. The findings of the survey confirmed that a "considerable number of Roma feel that pollution, grime and other environmental problems – such as smoke, dust and unpleasant smells or polluted water – are a problem, particularly in the Czech Republic and Portugal, where 41% and 36%, respectively, indicate this to be an issue." The report continues to show that nearly one in three Roma in Slovakia and Croatia, and more than every fourth in Hungary, Spain, Bulgaria and Greece reported that they were affected by pollution and other environmental problems. According to the survey, Romania is interestingly the only country in which the share of Roma living in a polluted environment is lower than that of the general population, a finding that would need further scrutiny given several examples of extreme environmental injustice faced by Roma communities in Romania. The survey also provided the widely quoted figure that every third Roma lives without tap water at home.⁵⁷

The fact that the current Framework runs until 2020 and is under review creates an opportunity to broaden its scope and to include questions of environmental justice.

54 COM(2010) 133 final of 7 April 2010.

55 COM(2012) 226 final of 21 May 2012.

56 COM(2019) 406 final of 5 September 2019.

57 FRA, 2016.

Public funding

The public spending of the EU and member states needs to be scrutinised from an environmental justice perspective. Money from the European Social Fund has been allocated for measures targeting the socio-economic inclusion of disadvantaged people – including marginalised Roma. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) has earmarked funding for social infrastructure. Significant amounts of EU technical assistance at member states' disposal through structural funds are meant to be used for Roma-targeted projects. Cohesion Funds can be allocated to address Roma exclusion. The European Progress Microfinance Facility has defined Roma communities as one of the target groups of the instrument.

These funding activities raise some pertinent questions. How have these funds been used to decrease environmental injustice or are EU-funded projects perpetuating situations of environmental conflict? Are funds for environmental protection and restoration spent in ways that equally benefit different groups of society? Are public funds used equitably to provide public environmental services? How are funds available under the Instrument on Pre-Accession Assistance used in the Western Balkans and Turkey to address environmental injustices? Research by Škobla and Filčák on the impacts of an infrastructure project funded by the EU in Slovakia indicates that despite the intention to improve living conditions and to strengthen integration this financing has at times lead to the opposite: greater inequality and segregation.⁵⁸



Destruction due to flooding event in Asparuhovo, Bulgaria / Source: ejatlas.org

58 Škobla and Filčák, 2016.

3 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

3.1 Methodology

This report is part of a joint project implemented by the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), European Roma Grassroots Organisation Network (ERGO) network and Environmental Science and Technology Institute at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (ICTA-UAB). Its research objective was to identify patterns of environmental racism against Roma, the interconnections with other forms of discrimination and exclusion, as well as the associated health impacts.

For our research, we have selected the five European countries with the highest proportion of Roma (Hungary, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania and North Macedonia).⁵⁹ The underlying research has focused on situations of environmental racism against Roma, though we are fully aware of the fact that other forms of environmental injustice exist in the researched countries, for instance, against low-income groups. The researched cases are situations in which the majority of the affected population clearly belongs to a Roma community, and where adjacent villages, towns or neighbourhoods are comparatively less or not at all affected by the described impact. At the same time, there is significant evidence of a pattern of environmental racism across the EU.

The report uses the Environmental Justice Atlas (EJAtlas) to map, systematise and analyse cases of environmental racism against Roma communities. The EJAtlas is a large, openly accessible online database that collects information about environmental conflicts. It has been developed and is maintained by a team of researchers at ICTA-UAB. Cases are introduced either by the team of researchers at ICTA-UAB or by local groups and civil society organisations, researchers or activists. The information for each case has to be entered by filling in pre-defined categories on the online database to allow ICTA-UAB to systematise and analyse the cases. Before publication, all cases are reviewed and verified by ICTA-UAB researchers to ensure the necessary quality of the information and the availability of verifiable resources. The data analysis for a group of cases uses coding methods that trace the source of the conflict, the cause or

project behind the conflict, forms of mobilisation, the different impacts, and the outcome and solution of the case.

The database aims to increase the visibility of environmental conflicts, to highlight claims and testimonies and to make corporations and governments accountable for the injustices caused by their activities. It serves as a platform for those working on environmental justice conflicts to access information, exchange and connect with other organisations, activists and scientists working on similar issues. Today, it contains more than 3,000 cases worldwide, mainly related to mining, fossil fuels, water management and dams, land conflicts, and polluting industries. Around one in six of the mapped conflicts are located in Europe.

The EJAtlas does not claim to cover with certainty all or even most of the important conflicts in the world. The data is incomplete either because important cases have not been mapped or recent developments have not been covered in an existing case. ICTA-UAB and its partners working with and for the EJAtlas, including the EEB, constantly seek to make the EJAtlas more comprehensive by continued development, expansion and updating. Until before the launch of this research project, only very few cases covered environmental conflicts that affect Roma communities. The project partners decided to use the EJAtlas as a tool to create more visibility for environmental justice cases affecting Roma, and to close the documentation gap.

The EJAtlas operates with a concept of environmental conflict which is closely linked to the concept of environmental justice. Environmental conflicts are situations of environmental injustice which local communities, social movements or other activists mobilise to challenge. The mobilisation may include support from national or international networks against particular economic activities, infrastructure construction, waste disposal or pollution. The mobilisation can

⁵⁹ Minca, 2016. The five countries were chosen due to their significant Roma population: Bulgaria (10%), Slovakia (9%), Romania (8%), Hungary (7%), and North Macedonia (2,6%).

be strong, for instance, through on-going protests on the streets or a court case, but also latent or low, for instance, in situations where the local community complains. While environmental conflicts are not limited to environmental impacts, these are a key element of the local struggle.

In order to collect cases of environmental racism against Roma communities that can be mapped as environmental conflicts in the EJAtlas, six field researchers gathered information on cases in the five European countries upon which this project focuses. A desk researcher at ICTA-UAB has collected additional cases in these five countries as well as cases in Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo*⁶⁰ and Montenegro based on desk research. Between May and September 2019, the researchers visited the locations and spoke to local communities, activists, public authorities, journalists and other experts to gain more detailed information. First-hand information has been substantiated by secondary sources, such as existing scholarly articles, NGO reports and media articles.

This report is part of a pilot project and the research work could not be expanded to systematically identify all relevant cases in all countries with significant Roma populations, but had to be limited to the above-mentioned countries and example cases. While the list of cases is not exhaustive, the cases selected are emblematic.

Nevertheless, the scope of the research and the number of cases researched and documented allow us to go beyond case studies and to identify patterns of environmental racism. The research methodology was designed to demonstrate that a significant number of Roma communities face environmental racism, that this results in specific health risks and that this is not an isolated phenomenon but a systemic problem.

Based on a preliminary long list of potential cases, which all involved researchers had gathered, a selection of situations was made for further research. The selection was based on the following criteria: a) cases where the researchers were able to obtain enough information and provide verifiable resources; b) cases that are on-going and, therefore, still relevant for policymakers and civil society alike; c) a relevant number of cases from each country and from sub-regions within the researched countries; and e) cases that show a variety

of environmental justice issues.

In total, the researchers gathered information on 49 cases. ICTA-UAB reviewed all cases and selected 32 cases which met all criteria for publication in the Atlas.⁶¹ ICTA-UAB systematised and analysed these 32 cases. The analysis provides figures on the distribution on the different types of conflicts, the population affected, the mobilisation against the discriminatory practices, the measures taken to find solutions and the outcome of the conflict, as well as reported health impacts. The results were compiled into and visualised through a [thematic map on the Environmental Justice Atlas](#). The 32 cases published on the atlas and their numerical evaluation form the basis of the following analysis. Findings from the additional cases have been considered as well, together with information compiled by existing scientific and other publications.

Given the limitations of our approach, future research could give particular focus to:

- A more exhaustive list of situations;
- Environmental justice cases in additional countries, especially older members of the EU where individual cases have been reported and we expect similar patterns to be in place;
- Particular impacts of environmental injustice on Roma women;
- How far Roma communities can equally enjoy Aarhus Convention rights in environmental decision-making;
- How Roma communities are discriminated against when it comes to the implementation and enforcement of EU environmental law;
- How far public funding, in particular EU funding, has been used to improve the situation or has in certain cases aggravated a situation;
- Legal action addressing environmental racism;
- Positive examples for solving environmental justice cases.

60 * This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence. This applies to the whole report.

61 See Annex 1 for a list of all 32 published cases.

3.2 Literature Review

As a starting point for this report, Ksenija Hanaček and colleagues at ICTA-UAB conducted a systematic literature review to assess the current state of scientific research on the topic. The literature review focused on five countries in Central and Eastern Europe (Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia and North Macedonia).⁶²

Overall, there has not been a lot of research on the nexus between social exclusion, health impacts and environmental issues affecting Roma communities. So far, there is no systematic analysis of environmental racism against Roma across Europe. Data that could be used to inform an analysis of how different factors impact the health status of Roma communities is often insufficient. Research regularly relies on old data, estimates, proxy indicators and small-scale studies which cannot be extrapolated to larger populations. Since the first article on environmental discrimination and negative health impacts for Roma in 2001 was published, few others followed. Interestingly, the number of publications increased after the adoption of the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma Non-discrimination, Social Inclusion and Health in 2010 and the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies in 2011.⁶³

ICTA-UAB's literature review highlights that the articles predominantly touch upon legal, political and social discrimination, focusing on housing, education, employment and access to health services. The existing literature frequently reports housing conditions as being isolated settlements, ghettos or slums. Moreover, several articles touch upon the fact that these are often very close to landfills, industrial sites, extraction or mining sites, as well as highways and railways, and that industrial areas or railway lines regularly cut off these neighbourhoods from other parts of town.

The articles also refer to the fact that spatial segregation is often linked to a lack of access to public services such as clean water, adequate sanitation and the sewage system. The absence of a public water supply forces these communities to use unprotected and sometimes infected water resources. These findings of the literature review are confirmed by a study conducted by the ERRC in 2017 providing evidence of limited and insufficient access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation in 93 Roma settlements and neighbourhoods in seven countries.⁶⁴ The analysis of the reviewed articles has further shown that air pollution, smoke, dust and unpleasant smells, extreme high or low temperatures and noise are serious problems for Roma communities, a fact confirmed by the already cited survey conducted by FRA in 2016.

While there are only a few articles, the existing literature clearly establishes a link between environmental racism and negative impacts on the health and overall well-being of Roma communities. A 2018 study by EPHA on Roma health and early child development shows higher rates of illness and mortality among Roma with an average life expectancy between five and 20 years lower than the majority populations. Environmental conditions are one of the contributing factors to the difference in life expectancy.⁶⁵

62 See Hanaček, Demaria and Martinez-Alier, 2019. The study followed a comprehensive approach to identify research on the topic using Scopus, Web of Science and Google Scholar. It selected the available literature and conducted a qualitative analysis using coding software NVivo.

63 According to the literature review, the most studied countries are Hungary and Romania with 26 scientific papers, followed by Slovakia with 25, Bulgaria with 20 and North Macedonia with 12 articles published.

64 Albania, France, Hungary, North Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, and Slovakia.

65 Among other factors such as the quality of health care, socio-economic environment, vaccination uptake, prevalence of major infectious diseases, health conditions and differences in the quality of healthcare (EPHA, 2018).

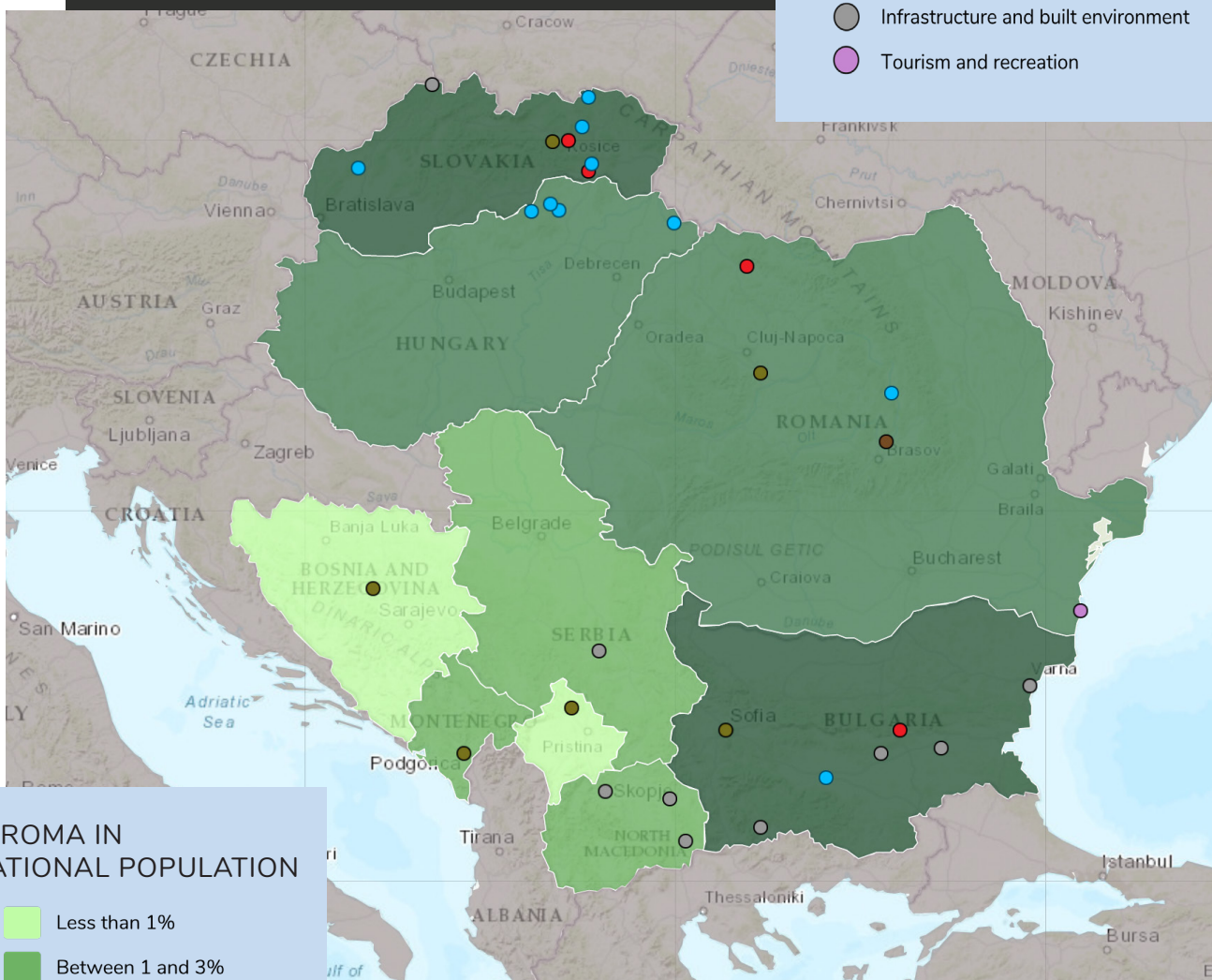
4 ANALYSIS OF CASES

4.1 Map of environmental racism against Roma

This map illustrates 32 cases of environmental racism against Roma communities in Central and South Eastern Europe. The EJAtlas team at ICTA-UAB developed this map in cooperation with the EEB, ERGO network and a team of researchers working in Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and North Macedonia. It provides a sample of the widespread environmental injustice that Roma communities experience in Europe due to deeply entrenched racial discrimination and social exclusion.

TYPE OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICT

- Biomass and land
- Industrial and utilities
- Water management
- Waste management
- Infrastructure and built environment
- Tourism and recreation



% ROMA IN NATIONAL POPULATION

- Less than 1%
- Between 1 and 3%
- Between 7 and 8%
- Between 9 and 10%

Source: EJAtlas.org

This section presents the analysis of the selected 32 cases of environmental racism against Roma communities identified in Bulgaria, Slovakia, Romania, Hungary, North Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Kosovo. The assessment is based on ICTA-UAB's systematisation and data analysis of the 32 cases published in the EJAtlas⁶⁶, the authors' comparison and analysis of the cases considering additional information gathered through 19 more cases researched, and information from existing research.

The analysed cases of environmental racism against Roma are mostly found in urban settings (17 of 32 cases) followed by semi-urban settings (8) and rural settings (7). Around 154,000 Roma are directly affected by these 32 cases.

Based on our analysis we have found three main categories of situations in which Roma communities are disproportionately affected by exposure to environmental degradation or by being deprived of environmental services and benefits:

1) **CUT OFF**: Disconnection or non-provision of public environmental services, in particular denied or limited access to water, inadequate sanitation and/or waste collection, and other situations where Roma communities are excluded from environmental services that neighbouring areas receive.

2) **PUT IN DANGER**: Roma communities have no other choice than to live in environmentally degraded and polluted sites including landfills, contaminated industrial sites, such as mining complexes and smelters or former military bases, or in areas prone to environmental hazards, such as floods.

3) **PUSHED ASIDE**: Forced evictions from land, water resources or places with high economic value to make place, for instance, for new housing or tourism facilities.

The predominant types of conflicts in situations of environmental racism against Roma in the 32 chosen cases are mainly about water and waste management, as well as conflicts related to infrastructure (see figure 1). In smaller numbers, the conflicts also include situations of industrial and utilities conflict, and one case involving a conflict over biomass and land as well as another involving tourism and recreation.

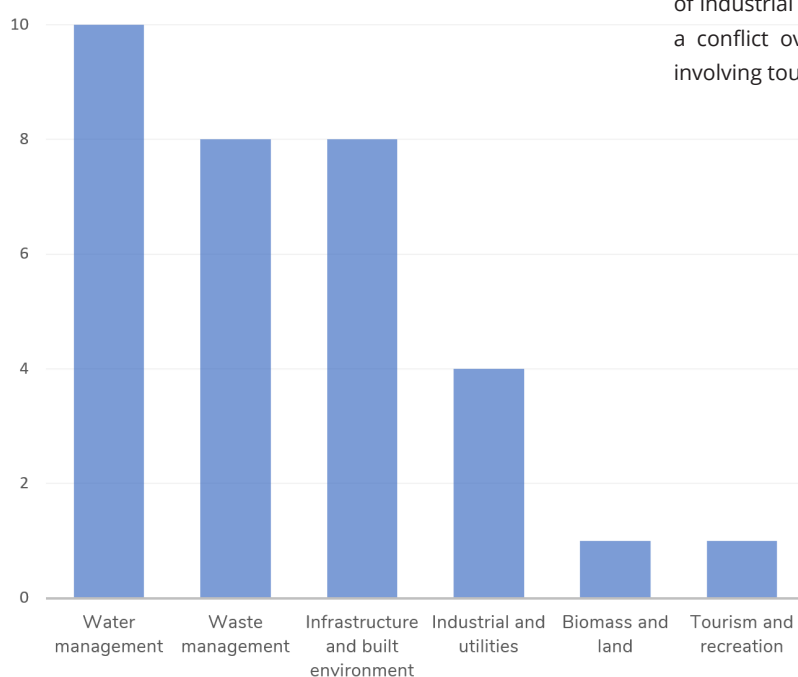


Figure 1. Type of environmental conflict per number of identified cases.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Hanaček, Demaria & Martinez-Alier, 2019.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

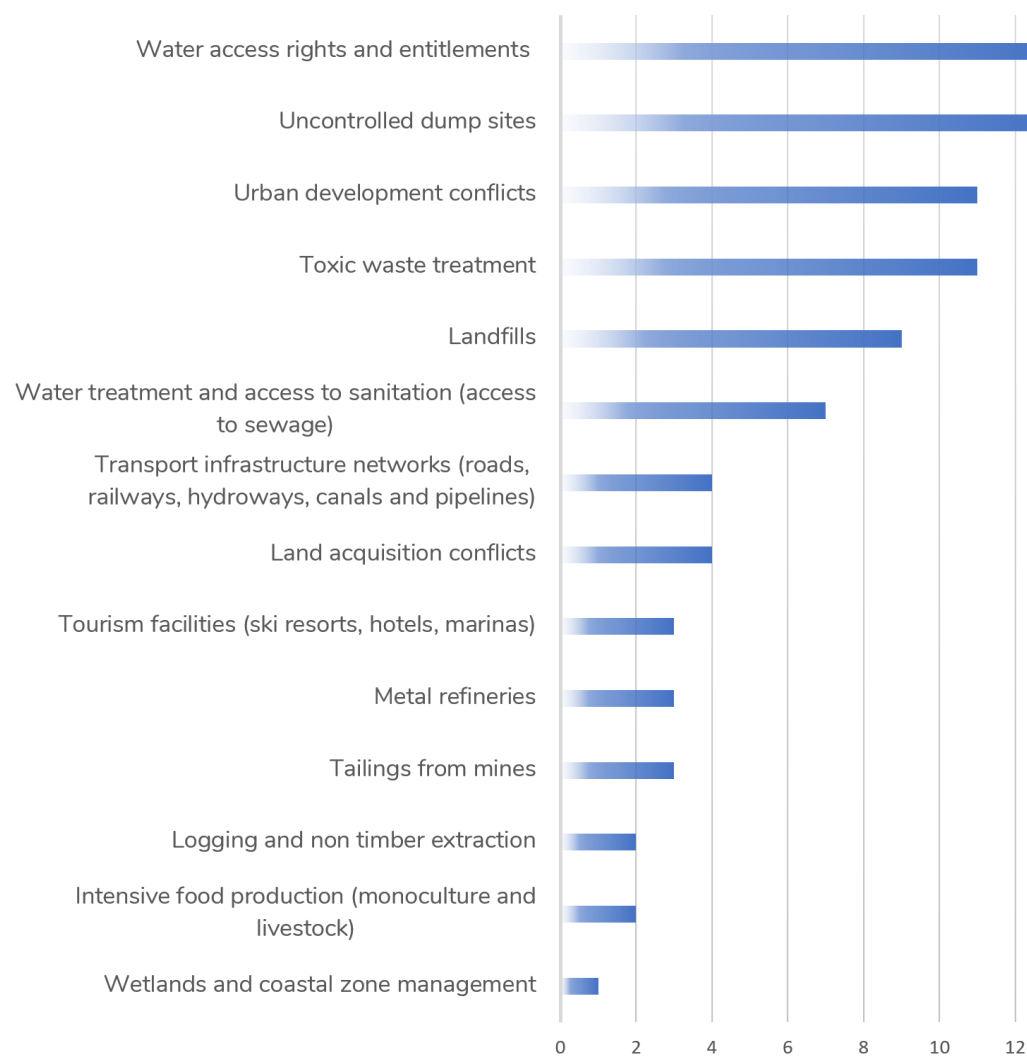


Figure 2. Conflict subcategories identified within the 32 cases.⁶⁸

Figure 2 shows the subcategories within broader types of conflicts. It illustrates that water-related issues (water access rights and entitlements, water treatment and access to sewage) as well as waste-related issues (uncontrolled dumpsite, toxic waste treatment, landfills)

are the most common subcategories. In most cases, these different categories and subcategories overlap, or one results from the other. In order to systematise the cases, we have grouped them based on the issue at the core of each situation.

68 Hanaček, Demaria and Martinez-Alier, 2019.

4.2 Cut off: Access denied to fundamental environmental services

Representing 18 out of 32 cases, more than half of all analysed cases are situations of environmental racism related to access to water, adequate sanitation and waste management. More specifically, 13 cases relate to water access rights and water treatment, 13 to uncontrolled waste dumps sites, and seven to access to sanitation. The cases illustrate a clear discriminatory pattern when it comes to access to basic environmental services. In many situations, Roma communities living on the outskirts of towns and villages, in urban ghettos, or in isolated settlements are provided with no, little or irregular public environmental services. The same services are provided in other parts of the same municipality or town.

The discriminatory practice in the provision of environmental services is made possible by the spatial segregation of Roma communities. The denial of environmental services is often very visible, with waste piling up and littering the whole settlement, small creeks or canals filling up with waste, or neighbourhoods turning into muddy fields after heavy rains due to the absence of adequate drainage. In some cases, the Roma neighbourhood which is denied basic environmental services is even more drastically cut off from the rest of the municipality with a wall. In the case of [Sajokaza, Hungary](#), a segregation wall was built in 2018 in order to shield the Roma neighbourhood off from the rest of the village. Roma families living in the Sólóym settlement behind the wall do not have access to water in their houses but only to public taps. The wall is both a symbolic partition and the actual line of demarcation of where basic environmental services start and end.

Access to water

Looking specifically at access to water, other studies have come to similar findings. According to the WHO, Roma communities in Romania are the least likely to enjoy access to the public water system and are more likely to depend on water sources outside their homes, such as collecting water from the river.⁶⁹ This often forces Roma communities to rely on unsafe water resources. The lack of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation can increase the risk of infectious digestive diseases.

A representative case is to be found in [Prašník, Slovakia](#), a popular tourist destination for spa holidays which is

rich in water resources. The Roma settlement is the only neighbourhood without access to water. The Roma families have to fetch their water from a mountain stream which regularly freezes in the winter and whose water quality is not controlled. Roma women have to walk long distances, crossing fences and walls, to collect water in extreme weather conditions. Another telling example can be found in [Plovdiv](#), the European Culture Capital 2019: Stolipinovo is Europe's largest Roma settlement with a population of 60,000. The surrounding industrial zone separates it from the rest of Plovdiv. Many of the inhabitants are cut off from the public water supply and from waste collection services.

A particular practice has been documented in Hungary, where the public water supply was cut off by the authorities or service providers during summer heat waves. In [Gulács](#), the water supply to a Roma community of around 800 people was shut down in August 2017. Similarly, the 1,500 inhabitants of Huszártélep, also mostly Roma, had no water during a summer heatwave. In 2013, Roma settlements in [Ozd](#) were disconnected from the water supply during the hottest time of the year.

Adequate sanitation

The situation for access to adequate sanitation depicts a similarly alarming picture. According to a 2017 ERRC study, fewer than 12% of Roma communities had functioning flush toilets and drainage systems.⁷⁰ One example documented in our 32 cases are the [Roma communities in Fakulteta](#), a neighbourhood in the Bulgarian capital Sofia, which have been denied access to water and sanitation for over 70 years now.

Waste collection and management

Besides the lack of water supply and sanitation, several cases involved the denial of adequate waste collection services. The segregated Roma neighbourhoods are not or are only irregularly served by public or private waste collection service. As a consequence, waste piles up over years or decades and areas adjacent to the Roma settlement turn into uncontrolled waste dumps. This may also reinforce stereotypes of 'dirty gypsies'. In some cases, the development of waste dumps within Roma settlements leads inhabitants of other, non-Roma

69 WHO Regional Office for Europe, 2008.

70 ERRC, 2017.

neighbourhoods to feel entitled to dump their waste there, too. The case of [Markusovce in Slovakia](#) is a good example of the decades-long denial of waste collection services. The [situation in Fakulteta](#) in Sofia exemplifies a situation in which the denial of waste management services has turned the Roma neighbourhood into an open air waste dump which in return attracts refuse from other areas.

While some communities have no or insufficient access to the public water supply, sanitation or waste collection due to the lack of functioning infrastructure, other Roma communities are in theory connected, but cannot afford the relatively high cost involved, in particular for water. A study by ERRC in 2017 found that more than one quarter of the Roma investigated has been disconnected from water supplies or were in risk of being disconnected due to payment difficulties.⁷¹ Authorities or service provider use the argument that the Roma households do not pay their bills. In the case of [Ózd, Hungary](#), the authorities argued they were no longer able to pay for the costs linked to the water wells, using this argument as an excuse to cut off the water supply during a heat wave. In some situations, the households are actually not able to regularly afford the fees. In other cases, the fact that

substandard services were provided in the past has led the inhabitants to not pay – which in return means the service providers block the services.

Moreover, many Roma households cannot afford to regularly pay the bills for other utilities, including electricity and heating. Therefore, the issue of energy poverty is closely related to the non-provision of basic public services. For instance, in the Roma ghetto of [Lunik IX in Kosice](#), Slovakia, nearly all the inhabitants are unemployed and cannot pay their utility bills. As a consequence, people burn wood or waste to heat their homes. The practice increases the risk of fires and produces harmful fumes within and around homes.

Some cases also illustrate how the majority population is able to benefit from improvements in environmental services, while Roma communities are excluded from these positive developments. In the [case of Ózd](#), the city received nearly €5.5 million from the Swiss-Hungarian Cooperation Programme for the expressed purpose of providing running water to the Roma settlements. However, research has shown that many Roma families have not benefited from the scheme. Roma families have started to move away, and opposition politicians demanded to know what happened with the money.⁷²



Pile of waste in Pata Rât landfill, Romania / George Popesc, April 2017
Source: ejatlas.org

⁷¹ ERRC, 2017.

⁷² Ibid.

4.3 Put in danger: exposure to environmentally degraded, polluted or hazardous sites

Environmental racism against Roma communities can take the form of marginalisation to the most polluted or high-risk environmental areas of a region. A significant number of Roma live in the proximity of landfills, as well as abandoned or operational industrial sites in the periphery of cities. According to the numerical evaluation of the 32 cases, the living environment of the Roma communities are predominantly outskirts (14 cases) and industrial zones (10 cases). Many Roma communities live close to accumulated waste or landfill sites (9 and 8 cases respectively), separated from urban building complexes and in provisional shelters and cabins (both mentioned seven times).

Already in 2007, Steger et al. highlighted that these living conditions expose inhabitants to environmental risks from pollutants with devastating effects on the air and soil quality in these areas. This research showed that the soil around some Roma communities, often where children play, is contaminated by toxic substances, such as lead from industrial and mining operations. Our research has documented several such cases. The Roma settlement in [Vel'ka Ida](#), Slovakia, is located next to the U.S. Steel Factory Košice in Košice, one of the biggest steel producers in Central Europe. In addition to being located in a highly polluted environment, the Roma settlement is also separated by a high segregation wall. Poor housing conditions force families to burn wood and PVC bottles to heat their homes in winter which significantly increases serious health risks related to indoor air pollution. In [Krompachy, Slovakia](#), Roma families live next to a polluting copper factory. In [Turda, Romania](#), Roma families have no other option but to live in a former industrial site contaminated with mercury. In [Tvarditsa, Bulgaria](#), a Roma community is exposed to harmful electro-magnetic fields. A particularly harsh example is when, between 1999 and 2013, the UN

housed approximately 600 members of Roma, Ashkali and Balkan Egyptian families displaced during the Kosovo conflict in camps constructed on lead-contaminated toxic wasteland, close to the [Trepça industrial complex](#), containing a lead smelter and three tailing ponds of waste.

The fact that Roma communities have been pushed to live in the wastelands, such as in or next to landfills, has also pushed them to work as waste pickers. Typical examples are [Fakulteta](#) (Sofia, Bulgaria) and Pata Rat (in Cluj, Romania), but also the currently closed [Roma refugee camp Konik](#) in Montenegro. In all three cases, different Roma communities were pushed to live next to major landfills, where they are excluded from other job opportunities. Eventually, the Roma communities took to waste picking to generate incomes. As a consequence, they are exposed to the hazards of waste both through their housing location and their daily work.

Roma communities are further being exposed to other environmental hazards, such as the immediate danger of flooding. Communities in these areas are constantly at risk of being overrun by flooding. Steger highlighted that even if there is no immediate risk of a flood, the negative effects of humidity on living conditions can increase the risk of respiratory diseases and allergens, such as fungal spores, moulds and dust mites,⁷³ as well as nausea and vomiting.⁷⁴ For example, a flash flood in the [neighbourhood of Asparuhovo](#) in Varana, Bulgaria, killed 14 people, most of them Roma. Many homes were destroyed. To make matters worse, local authorities blamed Roma for the disaster. The future potential impacts of climate change, such as water shortages and extreme weather will further exacerbate these inequalities and disproportionately affect Roma communities living in these areas.⁷⁵

⁷³ Steger, 2007.

⁷⁴ Tamburlini, Ehrenstein, Bertollini and WHO, 2002.

⁷⁵ Antal, 2018.

4.4 Pushed aside: forced evictions and displacement

Displacement and forced evictions are the third main form of environmental racism practised against Roma communities as identified in the cases. Roma communities are evicted from land with high economic value, as well as for restoration purposes, an argument which can also serve as an excuse. Displacement is being reported as one of the main discriminatory practices, conflict outcome as well as a main negative socio-economic impact for Roma communities. More than half of the cases identified displacement and human rights violations as one of the major impacts. This was closely followed by loss of landscapes and livelihoods as well as land dispossession.⁷⁶ One-third of the cases identified reported forced evictions.⁷⁷

As identified by Filčák,⁷⁸ the distribution of environmental goods and bads is closely related to the value of land, segregation tendencies and questions of ownership and property rights. He highlighted the fact that due to the enormous change in the value of Roma land and its commercial potential these formally marginal sites become attractive prospects for housing or tourism development projects.⁷⁹ This can be illustrated in an example from [Constanța in Romania](#). Around 100 Roma were forcibly evicted due to the development of a new holiday resort. The communities had been living there for 40 years and been displaced to an industrial part of the coast after being evicted to the edge of the municipality near an excavation site. In [Skopje, North](#)

[Macedonia](#), a Roma community was evicted to make way for a hotel complex. Another example is the eviction and demolition of rundown housing complexes inhabited by Roma to make space for urban development, including the construction of a supermarket in [Yambol, Bulgaria](#), or the eviction of a Roma neighbourhood in [Garmen, Bulgaria](#). A particularly harsh case of eviction is the case in [Miercurea Ciuc, Romania](#). In [North Macedonia, in Kochani](#), a Roma community is in danger of eviction linked to a new housing project. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the [Banzloi Roma community](#) is threatened by eviction as the local municipality intends to develop a waste water treatment plant (with funds from Germany and Switzerland). These evictions or potential evictions further contribute to patterns of segregation, increase inequalities and raise exposure to environmental risk.

Another specific pattern are evictions for restoration or other environmental projects and the exclusion of Roma communities in environmental decision-making processes. Identified cases clearly shown disregard of all the above-mentioned aspects. For example, in [Lozenetz, Bulgaria](#), around 400 families have been evicted due to an afforestation project (and the trees have never been planted afterwards) which lead to the demolition of more than 50 Roma houses in July 2014. In Slovakia, in [Svrčinovec](#), a Roma community is threatened by eviction for the construction of an ecoduct over a highway.

76 Number of times identified in the cases: negative socio-economic impacts: displacement (24), human rights violations (23), loss of landscape (15), loss of livelihoods (12), land dispossession (10), unemployment (6); Intertwined environmental conflict-racism: displacement (15), waste management denial (14), water denial (12), hate speech, forced evictions, threats, house demolition (9).

77 Number of times identified in the cases intertwined environmental conflict-racism: forced evictions (9).

78 Filčák, 2012.

79 For a more detailed analysis on the role of entitlements in environmental injustice cases against Roma communities see Filčák, 2012.

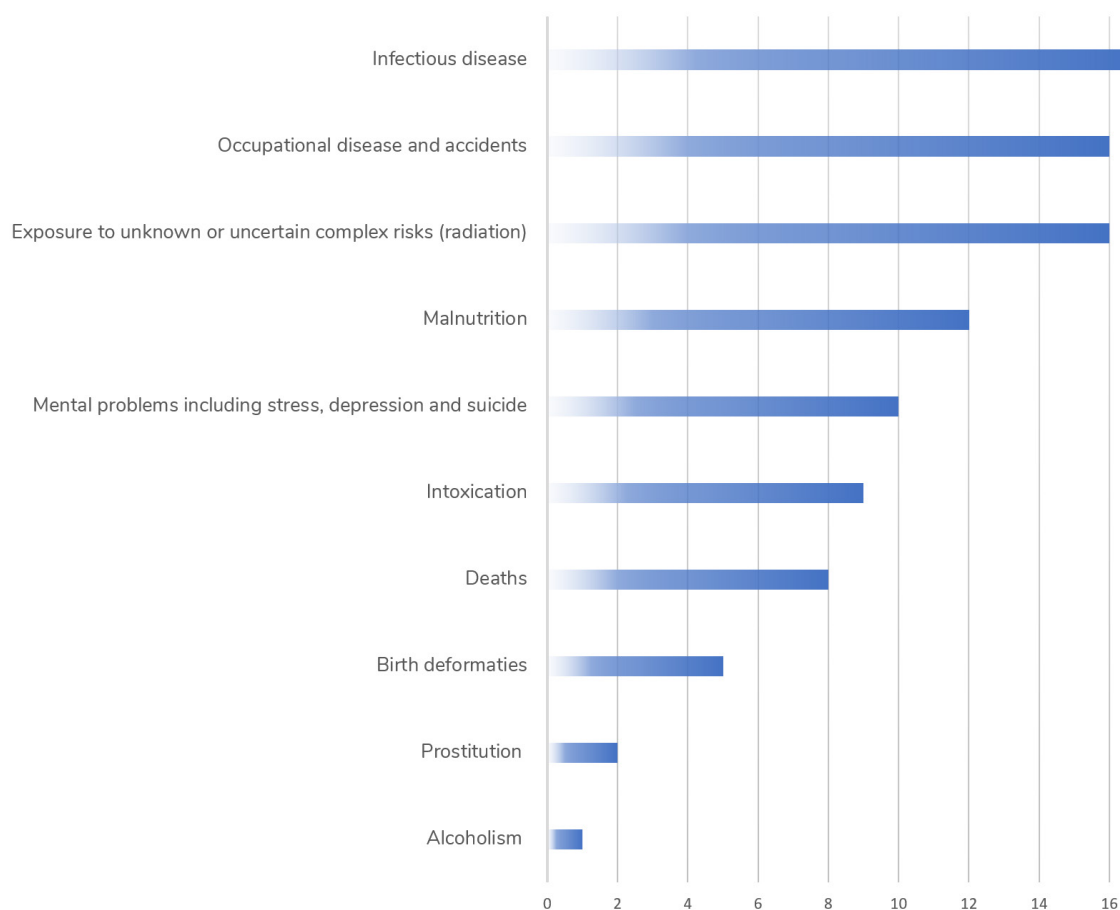


Figure 3. Health-related impacts that have been reported in relationship to the 32 analysed cases.⁸⁰

4.5 Negative health impacts

Environmental injustice practices are often related to serious health impacts as research from various countries has shown. The analysis of the 32 cases shows the most common health consequences are infectious diseases, exposure to unknown risks, occupational diseases and accidents, malnutrition and mental health diseases, such as depression, stress and suicide, as well as intoxication, where fatalities were reported in eight cases.

Previous studies indicated higher rates of illness and mortality among Roma than in non-Roma communities, meaning that the health condition of Roma communities is significantly worse than of the majority population. This significant gap can be attributed to a wide range of socio-economic determinants of health, such as discrimination, poverty, segregation in education, unemployment as well as differences in the quality of healthcare, or vaccination

uptake. The previous analysis has shown and confirmed that environmental determinants such as smoke, dust and unpleasant smells or polluted water, mainly through isolation and marginalization, have major implications for their health.⁸¹

The exposure to various toxins can lead to serious negative long-term effects on health. The identified cases involve surface water pollution, soil contamination, air pollution and reduced water quality in almost half of the cases identified.⁸² In the case of [Bardejov, Slovakia](#), the unprotected water source is reported to be polluted by pesticides from nearby intensive farming. The lack of adequate sewage in the case of [Strumica, North Macedonia](#), results in sewage overflows and flooding after heavy rains with a reported increase in infection, mostly amongst children.

⁸⁰ Hanaček, Demaria & Martinez-Alier, 2019.

⁸¹ EPHA, 2018.

⁸² Number of times identified in the cases: surface water pollution (17), soil contamination (16), air pollution (14), waste overflow (14) and soil erosion (11).

4.6 Responses to environmental conflict

In many of the cases, the Roma communities either remain under unfavourable conditions or decide to move away. According to the analysis provided by Hanaček, Demaria, and Martinez-Alier, only 6% of the identified cases have been qualified as a success in achieving environmental justice. That is, situations of environmental racism persist, and local groups, social movements and activists may attempt to seek justice but rarely find it.

In 94% of the cases, Roma communities, with the support of national and international NGOs, have started to protest and act against environmental injustice.⁸³ Overall, the response to the reported cases of environmental conflict is mostly latent or weak, that is, there is often little mobilisation or resistance against situations of injustice. Official complaint letters and petitions, media-based activism, public campaigns, involvement of national and international NGOs and lawsuits and court cases are the main forms of protest in the cases identified. The ERRC has supported 17 of the 32 cases, Amnesty International eight, and the Open Society Institute has been reported to be involved in three. Besides these larger organisations, numerous local groups and individual activists have been involved in addressing the issues identified in the cases.

In the 32 analysed cases, the authorities have predominantly responded with displacement, repression and the criminalisation of activists. The already quoted case of Strumica, Northern Macedonia, illustrates this: the local authorities destroyed, without prior notification, 11 Roma houses in order to build a new road in the area.

More positive outcomes include an increase in participation, environmental improvements and court decisions. However, out of eight court verdicts, four decisions are described as failures for environmental justice, one as being undecided and only three cases were successful. In some cases, improvements have been reported, but these are often insufficient and do not tackle the root causes. This can be illustrated in the case of environmental discrimination against Roma communities in the Sajó wetlands in Hungary. Although access to water has been improved in the community concerns regarding flooding, adequate sewage and water quality remain.

⁸³ Number of times groups complaining/resisting: Ethnically/racially discriminated groups (32), International NGOs (18), National NGOs (10), Neighbours, Communities (9), Women Groups (8), Local scientists and professionals (7), Local government, politicians (7).

5 EXAMPLE CASES

Up against the wall

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Country | Hungary |
| Type of conflict | Water/Waste management |
| Affected population | 200-400 |
| Start of the conflict | 01/01/1990 |
| Description | <p>A massive wall, built by the municipality in 2018, separates around 300 Roma from the non-Roma population in the Hungarian town Sajókaza. Tensions between the Roma and the other townsfolk are longstanding, particularly since the majority of the population lost their jobs in the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union and following factory closures. Houses in the segregated area lack running tap water, bathrooms, proper insulation, access to electricity and safe heating systems. The nearest potable water points are more than 150 metres away from the Roma houses. Another issue is the lack of a proper sewage and drainage system. The problem was partially addressed in 2019. However, due to the fact that some people are not in possession of the necessary legal documents regarding land tenure, certain streets were left without sewers and drains. The municipality has further invested in programmes to support the elderly and the youth of the Roma community. Although these measures have been taken, the wall perpetuates segregation and demonstrates that environmental justice has not been achieved.</p> |
| Environmental impact | Air pollution, surface water pollution, decreasing water quality |
| Health impact⁸⁴ | Various health issues related to lack of proper sanitation, exposure to bad indoor air quality and humidity and mould on walls. Life expectancy is reportedly between 40 and 60 years. |
| Socio-economic impact | Lack of work security, labour absenteeism, unemployment, human rights violations |
| More information | https://ejatlas.org/conflict/roma-community-separated-by-wall-without-adequate-access-to-waste-and-water-in-sajokaza-hungary |



A wall erected in Sajókaza, Hungary, between Roma and non-Roma populations
Source: Tamás Zádor ([Flickr](#))

⁸⁴ The reasons for the bad health of many Roma inhabitants of the village are complex due to several social and environmental factors.

Treated like trash

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Country | Romania |
| Type of conflict | Waste management |
| Affected population | 1500 |
| Start of the conflict | 17/12/2010 |
| Description | <p>Europe's largest waste-related ghetto is to be found in Cluj-Napoca, Romania's fourth biggest city. Around 1,500 people, mostly Roma, live in four different informal settlements around the Pata Rât landfill, situated a few kilometres away from the city centre. Leaks from the landfill pollute the soil and groundwater. The inhabitants often suffer from ear, eye and skin infections, asthma or bronchitis, high blood pressure, heart and stomach problems due to oozing substances and noxious smoke when waste is burned. Job opportunities are limited apart from those in the waste dump. Most of the children do not regularly attend school. In 2014, the Cluj-Napoca County Court declared illegal the city authorities' decision to displace the families from Coastei Street, one of the settlements, and force them to live under such conditions. It ruled that adequate housing in line with the minimum legal standards needs to be provided and that damages be paid to the families. In 2017, the European Commission took Romania to the European Court of Justice for its failure to close and rehabilitate 68 illegal landfills, including Pata Rât, especially because Romania had been allocated funding by the EU's European Regional Development Fund to replace the substandard waste dump with a new waste disposal system.</p> |
| Environmental impact | Air pollution, fires, soil contamination, waste overflow, surface water pollution and decreasing water quality |
| Health impact | Accidents, occupational disease and accidents, exposure to unknown or uncertain complex risks (radiation, etc.), malnutrition, mental problems including stress, depression and suicide, deaths |
| Socio-economic impact | Displacement, lack of work security, labour absenteeism, unemployment, land dispossession |
| More information | https://ejatlas.org/conflict/pata-rat-landfill-cluj-napoca-romania |



Pile of waste in Pata Rat, Cluj, Romania
Source: Dan Perjovschi ([Wikimedia commons](#))

Roma families given their marching orders



The Military barracks called 'ASNOM'
Source: Mustafa Asanovski
(ejatlas.org)

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Country | North Macedonia |
| Type of conflict | Infrastructure and Built Environment |
| Affected population | 200-400 |
| Start of the conflict | 01/01/1998 |
| Description | In 1970, Roma families were placed in a military barracks called 'ASNOM' by the Kochani municipal authorities. Now, decades later, 24 Roma families are being evicted due to a housing project for student dormitories connected to the Faculty of Law at Goce Delcev University. The dislocation plans have only been announced verbally. As of today, neither has the new location to which the Roma will be moved been specified nor has any concrete action been taken. In addition, residents have limited access to water and the sewage system. They are also forced to improvise their electricity supply, acquiring it from a nearby pole, which is a source of constant danger. According to the residents, at least six fires are caused by their makeshift electricity supply each year. Moreover, the building itself is very old and on the verge of collapse. The housing situation seriously affects the health of the Roma families living there. The children, in particular, are exposed to a constant risk of skin infections. |
| Environmental impact | Air pollution, floods (river, coastal, mudflow), waste overflow, surface water pollution, decreasing water quality, food insecurity (crop damage), loss of landscape/aesthetic degradation, groundwater pollution and/or depletion |
| Health impact | Mental problems including stress, depression and suicide, and infectious diseases |
| Socio-economic impact | Displacement, loss of livelihood, land dispossession |
| More information | https://ejatlas.org/conflict/the-roma-community-living-in-the-asnom-military-barracks-in-kochani-live-in-substandard-living-conditions |

Resorting to unlawful evictions



Roma family left homeless after being evicted
Source: ejatlas.org

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Country | Romania |
| Type of conflict | Tourism and Recreation |
| Affected population | 100 |
| Start of the conflict | 01/10/2013 |
| Description | <p>Eforie, a Black Sea holiday resort known for its clear blue waters, gleaming beaches and mild summer climate, became the scene of drastic and unlawful action by the local municipality in 2013 against more than 100 Roma, including 55 children, living in the area. The Roma had been living in this area for more than 40 years.</p> <p>In October 2013, the homes of the Roma families were demolished without consultation or provisions being made for alternative housing. These Roma were left homeless and vulnerable on the margins of society, in stark contrast to the idyllic tourist beach resort from which they were evicted. 80 law enforcement officers ensured the demolition went ahead unhindered while the Roma inhabitants watched as their homes were reduced to rubble.</p> <p>Local media reported the deputy mayor's threats to resisting Roma at the site: "If you don't come out, we're going to kill you here." The days that followed saw the victims living outdoors in temporary shelters until some were able eventually to take refuge in an abandoned school building without windows or electricity. Others were housed in an equally grim disused dormitory.</p> <p>NGOs drew attention to this case and brought it to a domestic court and the European Court of Human Rights which compelled the local municipality to halt the eviction of the Roma from the container settlement in March 2016. Despite the court order, the community was moved, once again, beyond the industrial zone. Although these are brand new apartments, the Roma are still disconnected from services and the work opportunities they had before.</p> |
| Environmental impact | Decreased water quality, air pollution |
| Health impact | Infectious diseases |
| Socio-economic impact | Displacement, land dispossession, human rights violations |
| More information | https://ejatlas.org/conflict/roma-black-sea |

When the deluge comes, scapegoat Roma

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Country | Bulgaria |
| Type of conflict | Infrastructure and Built Environment |
| Affected population | 1000 |
| Start of the conflict | 20/06/2014 |
| Description | <p>Asparuhovo district in Varna, home to nearly 1000 Roma, was the hardest hit area during the June 2014 floods. The city was flooded by a meter-high wave of water and mud because a 4.5 km² ravine was unable to contain the deluge. Entire streets and houses vanished. A total of 14 people died, including four children. The majority of the homes of the Roma community living in the area were built on the ravine, usually without a permit, as the municipality does not consider Roma to be residents of the town. This made Roma communities especially prone to the risk of flooding. Despite this vulnerability, no one had ever warned them of the high risk of flooding before. In addition, the Roma were also partly blamed for causing the flooding and its consequences because of the timber they extract in the upper part of the neighbourhood to seek out a living. Anti-Roma sentiment and discrimination shifted public attention from those who bear actual responsibility: the Bulgarian government and local authorities.</p> |
| Environmental impact | Loss of landscape/aesthetic degradation, waste overflow, floods (river, coastal, mudflow) |
| Health impact | Accidents, deaths, infectious diseases |
| Socio-economic impact | Displacement and land dispossession |
| More information | https://ejatlas.org/conflict/authorities-of-asparuhovo-town-in-bulgaria-blame-a-flooding-event-on-roma-community-by-using-a-hate-speech |



A street in Asparuhovo after flooding event in 2014
Source: ejatlas.org

The polluted waters separating Roma from the mainstream

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Country | Slovak Republic |
| Type of conflict | Water management |
| Affected population | 1000 |
| Start of the conflict | 01/01/2017 |
| Description | <p>A Roma settlement in Jarovnice is separated from the nearby Slovakian neighbourhood by a contaminated stream which is filled with waste. The contamination is caused by a landfill for municipal waste which is located in the area. The Roma communities are forced to collect and use the polluted water, as there is no other potable water available for them. Furthermore, mismanagement of local forests and water catchment areas, clear cutting and illegal logging have intensified the risk of flooding in the Roma settlement. This resulted in a tragedy in the late 1990s. Heavy rains on 20 June 1998 brought about the worst floods in Slovak history. Approximately 25 non-Roma homes and some 140 Roma dwellings were affected, resulting in the death of 47 people, 45 of whom were Roma.</p> |
| Environmental impact | Soil contamination, soil erosion, waste overflow, surface water pollution / decreasing water quality, groundwater pollution or depletion, floods (river, coastal, mudflow) |
| Health impact | Infectious diseases and deaths |
| Socio-economic impact | Displacement and land dispossession |
| More information | https://ejatlas.org/conflict/a-polluted-stream-and-a-landfill-as-a-racial-segregation-of-roma-communities-in-jarovnice-slovak-republic |



Houses of the Roma community in Jarovnice, Slovak Republic
Source: ejatlas.org

6 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

With this chapter, the EEB and ERGO network put forward an initial set of recommendations that will be followed up by more specific recommendations for different levels of governance and different institutions.

Beyond specific policy areas, we recommend that the EU and member states:

- Integrate environmental justice in all policies for Roma inclusion and mainstream environmental aspects in all European and national Roma policies;
- Focus more on guaranteeing high levels of human health protection (Art. 35 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights) as well as a high level of environmental protection (Art. 37) in all EU and national policies on Roma inclusion;
- Consider environmental justice questions, in particular environmental racism against Roma communities, in all environmental and sustainable development policies including sustainable development strategies and/or SDG implementation plans;
- Improve the assessment of the issue to inform better policymaking, including systematic analysis of the issue across the region including old and new Member States and candidate countries.

With the current EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and its monitoring under review, we make the following recommendations for the post-2020 framework:

- Combat antigypsyism in all its forms and manifestations as a horizontal and stand-alone priority including through strong legislative measures while recognizing environmental discrimination as a specific manifestation of antigypsyism;
- Lead to a comprehensive, binding, EU Strategy for Roma inclusion that includes candidate countries on equal footing, with concrete minimum standards and ambitious targets, as well as common monitoring at the EU level, including on environmental justice matters;
- Increase capacity-building, support and channels for Roma civil society to perform their watchdog role, and to meaningfully engage in the design, implementation, and monitoring of public policies that affect them, in particular, to build the capacity on environmental justice matters;
- Integrate a new focus on environmental justice, in particular regarding the disproportional exposure to environmental degradation, pollution and

natural hazards, the denial of environmental services, forced evictions as well as the relationship between environmental degradation in segregated settlements and poor health outcomes;

- Place an even stronger focus on access to water and adequate sanitation and integrate access to waste collection and management services;
- Provide more and better data on environmental justice (in line with the FRA's proposal for post-2020 indicators), in particular, on environmental health risks, by asking specific questions about the kind of environmental degradation, pollution and environmental hazards that Roma are exposed to, about the concrete negative health effects linked to that exposure, as well as on access to information, participation in environmental decision-making and access to justice.

We suggest that environmental justice should be integrated in the post-2020 framework as a stand-alone, substantive thematic area.

A thematic area on fighting environmental discrimination and promoting environmental justice has already been suggested by the FRA in its proposal for a post-2020 monitoring framework. The new thematic area should address the different dimensions of environmental discrimination such as the systematic denial of environmental services, communities forced to live and work in environmentally degraded, polluted or contaminated areas or in areas prone to environmental hazards such as floods, forced evictions towards less favourable environments as well as poor health outcomes.

The new thematic area on environmental justice should give particular focus to:

- Stressing the link between antigypsyism and environmental justice, combating the stereotype that Roma communities create environmental problems (such as pollution, littering or environmental degradation) and promoting a better understanding of how environmental discrimination and the lack of environmental services forces Roma communities to live in environmentally degraded areas;
- Directing more attention towards the persistent problem of spatial segregation of many Roma neighbourhoods as a root cause of environmental discrimination (with interlinkages to the thematic areas on housing, health, employment and education).
- The equal provision of environmental services

including provision of drinking water, an adequate sewage system and in particular waste collection and waste management, an aspect absent from the current framework (with a strong interlinkage to the question of adequate housing);

- Provisions to stop forced evictions and to address how evictions are often linked to questions of environmental justice when Roma are displaced and pushed towards less favourable environments;
- The lack of access to living areas with green capital and recreational value;
- Environmental health risks such as exposure to pollution and contamination, living and/or working in a polluted environment, lack of access to green spaces, etc. and how these contribute to the unequal health outcomes for Roma communities when compared to the majority population (with strong interlinkages to the thematic area on health);
- Occupational health and safety when working in environmentally less favourable conditions, for instance, as informal waste pickers, where Roma are exposed to environmental health risks (with strong interlinkages to the thematic area on employment);
- Measures that can ensure procedural rights for Roma communities in environmental matters, including the right to information, the right to participation in decision-making in environmental matters, and access to justice if these rights are not adequately granted.

Regarding other policy areas, we recommend the following measures:

Environmental rights and Aarhus Convention

In the context of the implementation of the Aarhus Convention by the EU and member states, we recommend to:

- Assess in how far Roma communities across the EU and in candidate countries have equal access to information, are granted the right to participation in environmental decision making and can access courts in environmental matters;
- Understand in how far non-inclusive procedures lead to unfair outcomes;
- Develop measures that ensure equal procedural rights for Roma communities at member state level.

Implementation of EU environmental law

Looking at the implementation of existing EU environmental law, we recommend that the European Commission:

- Creates a better understanding of how far situations of environmental racism are linked to breaches of European environmental law with particular attention given to the EU Drinking Water Directive and the EU Water Framework Directive, the Industrial Emissions Directive and the Ambient Air Quality Directive, the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive and Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, and the EU Waste Framework Directive;
- Assesses to what extent cases of environmental racism against Roma communities and unequal implementation of environmental law can be addressed through infringement procedures and through enhanced cooperation with member states, for instance, through the Environmental Implementation Review or the European Union Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law (IMPEL);
- Proposes, where adequate, to add references to the situation of Roma communities into existing European environmental law similar to the revised Drinking Water Directive which now includes an important reference to Roma, requiring member states to ensure access to water for vulnerable and marginalised groups. This will also help implement EU policy on Roma integration within the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and the Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States⁸⁵.

Public funding across the EU

Concerning public funding at both the national and EU levels we recommend:

- To prioritise Roma inclusion in the next MFF programming period, ensuring that Roma communities are involved in the delivery of European funds at the national and local level;
- To earmark funding to address environmental justice;
- To ensure that EU-funded projects to fight the exclusion of Roma communities are designed in a way that leads to positive environmental outcomes;
- To guarantee that anti-discrimination measures need to focus on the de-segregation of Roma communities.

⁸⁵ See https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/42445/st05813-en20.pdf?utm_source=dsms-auto&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Safe+and+clean+drinking+water%3a+Council+approves+provisional+deal+which+updates+quality+standards

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