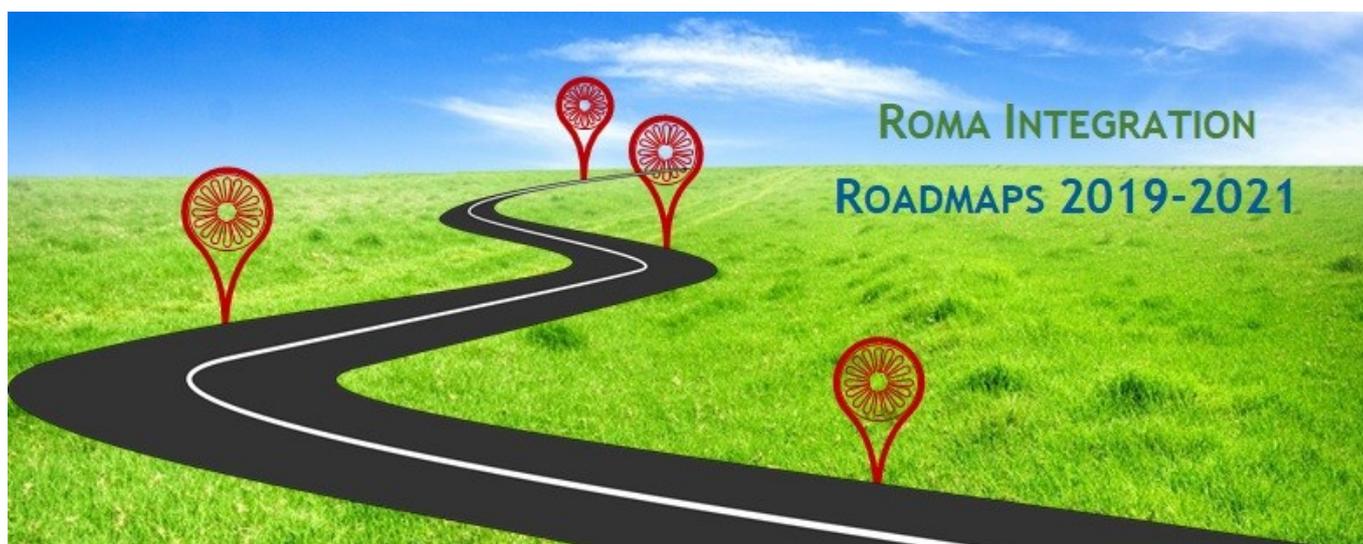




# ROMA INTEGRATION ROADMAP 2019-2021

## KOSOVO\*

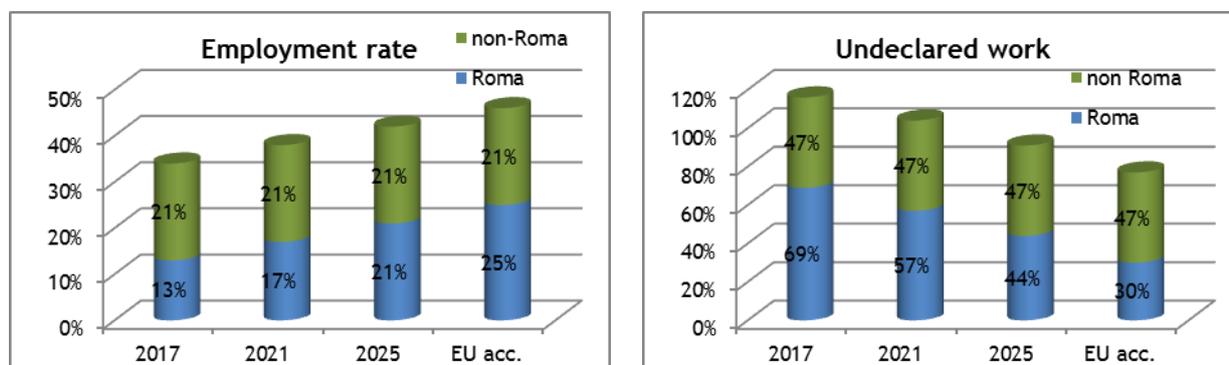


*Roma Integration 2020 is co-funded by*



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# Employment



The employment rate among Roma in Kosovo\* is not available in the [National Roma Integration Strategy](#) (NRIS), but an indicative information is provided that the employment rate among Roma is 7%, compared to 40% of Albanians and 21% of Serbs, in two municipalities in Kosovo\*. The data from the 2017 Regional Roma Survey describe a similar situation of only **13% employment among Roma, 21% among non-Roma living in proximity with Roma**, and an average of 29% across Kosovo\*. At the same time, the undeclared work among Roma, but also among non-Roma in Kosovo\* is very high. **The undeclared work among Roma is almost 70%, while among non-Roma near 50%.** In such a situation, setting the targets for Kosovo\* in terms of increasing employment by, at the same time, reducing the undeclared work, is a difficult task, as the targets should be ambitious, but at the same time take into consideration the challenging context. On the other hand, since Kosovo\* needs to tackle the unemployment and undeclared work on its path to EU integration, the situation may be seen as advantageous. The issues of Roma may be taken into consideration at the same time when a mainstream policy is formulated, thus Roma are not left behind as in other economies, but benefit from the efforts in these fields simultaneously with others. Therefore, the targets that may be set for Kosovo\* are increase of the employment rate among Roma by 4% from the baseline by 2021, 2025 and further increase (of at least 4%) by the time Kosovo\* has a prospect to accede to EU membership. The target of 17% employment rate by 2021 is also in line with the Kosovo\*'s National Roma Integration Strategy. These targets may be set more ambitiously once Kosovo\* develops effective mainstream employment policy. The targets for the reduction of undeclared work may be set at 57% in 2021, 44% in 2025 and at most 30% by Kosovo\*'s EU accession, with the same note that the targets should be revised and made more ambitious once Kosovo\* has formulated and started implementing effective mainstream policy for tackling undeclared work. It should also be noted that the rates for the non-Roma when defining the targets are also expected to change (although in the graphs they remain the same as the baseline).

With almost 70% of Roma involved in the informal economy, the most efficient and effective way to increase the employment of Roma would be to transform the informal into formal economy. However, the National Roma Integration Strategy has not envisaged any measures for transforming undeclared into declared work among Roma. The strategy envisages collecting data on unemployed Roma, assessment of the needs of unemployed Roma, studying successful employment models from abroad, designing specific employment programmes for Roma, informing Roma on the public services and measures in employment, and promoting successful Roma role-models. According to the annual report prepared by the Government of Kosovo\*, the implementation defers from the plan, as there is only reporting on the participation of Roma in the mainstream employment measures (on-job trainings, public works, subsidised employment, grants for self-employment, internships, vocational trainings, and employment mediation). In 2017 1,094 Roma participated in those measures, representing 4% of the total beneficiaries.

On the other hand, the Operational Conclusions from the Roma Seminar held by the Government of Kosovo\* and the European Union from 21 February 2018 recognise the great challenge of "black market economy". The recommendations to tackle the challenges in employment include establishing a proper data collection mechanism, as well as earmarking a portion of the [Fund for Entrepreneurship and Innovation \(FEI\)](#) for the employment of Roma. Although the operational conclusion are not directly referring to the transformation of undeclared work, a quota from FEI may be earmarked and dedicated for this purpose as the most effective method to increase the employ-

<sup>1</sup>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.

<sup>2</sup>In line with the use of the EU institutions and documents, the term "Roma" is used in this document as an umbrella term which includes groups of people who have more or less similar cultural characteristics, such as Roma, Egyptians, Ashkali, Dom, Lom, etc., whether sedentary or not.

<sup>3</sup>2017 Regional Roma Survey of the European Commission, United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

ment, along with formulating and implementing a comprehensive programme for implementation.

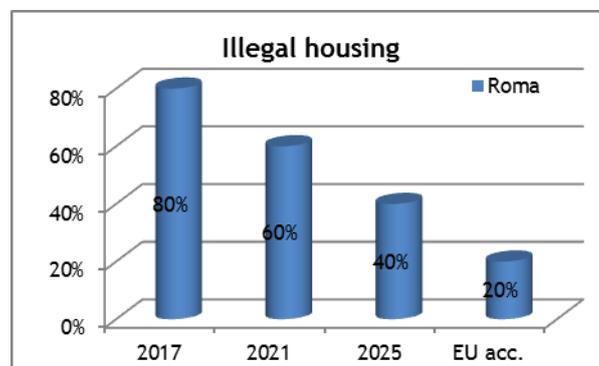
Transformation of informal into formal economy is envisaged with the Kosovo\*\*s [Economic Reform Programme 2019-2021](#), where the informal economy is estimated at 30% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and it is envisaged to be tackled with the [Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2022 to Fight the Informal Economy](#), which is still being drafted.

It should be noted that the civil society was consulted when developing this document. The key concerns of the civil society are that the informal economy is widespread and tackling it for Roma would be almost impossible, that there is distrust in the institutions and public services thus the estimated value for the paid taxes is low and demotivating, that the total income (of social benefits and informally earned money) provides for decent life which would not be possible by removing the social welfare and paying taxes, and that the social welfare system is also demotivating and passive.

There is no IPA funding specifically targeting Roma in Kosovo\*. However, there are mainstream IPA funded programmes that are relevant for the area of undeclared work, such as the [“Implement Active Labour Market Measures and Support Fight against Undeclared Work”](#), that may be used for the benefit of Roma.

The Roma Integration action shall work with the Government of Kosovo to ensure the specific situation and concerns regarding Roma active in the informal economy are duly taken into consideration within the currently developed Strategy to Fight the Informal Economy. The technical and expert assistance shall be used to provide evidence based input to this mainstream Strategy and formulate adequate measures within the Strategy that would outreach and benefit Roma, with the final aim of transforming the undeclared into declared work. The assistance shall also look at the current social welfare system and propose measures to ease the transition from undeclared work combined with social assistance towards declared work without social assistance. The proposed measures are going to be linked with the active employment measures in order to make better use of these existing measures to promote transformation of undeclared work, and will also look at the possibilities for developing of specific targeted programme that would be regularly funded by the Fund for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. If applicable, the proposed measures shall also be linked with available relevant IPA funding (mainstream or targeted).

## Housing



Unfortunately, there is no available information on the housing situation of Roma in Kosovo\* regarding housing ownership, homelessness and other aspects regarding security of tenure. The NRIS provides an overview of the efforts of Kosovo\* for providing housing to Roma in the period from 2005-2015, whereby around 600 housing units in total have been provided for Roma, and a small number of houses of Roma have been renewed (mostly through programmes for returning refugees). There is an indicator to measure the success of the implementation of the Strategy in Housing “Number of families that have regulated the status of the property they live in”. The baseline value for this indicator is 1,200, with a footnote explaining that it is estimated that 20% of the 6,000 Roma families in Kosovo\* have their regulated the ownership of their housing unit. The source of this information is not available within the NRIS. Further, the NRIS sets the target for 2021 regarding this indicator at 3,600. It is not clear if 3,600 families in total or 3,600 more families would have regulated their dwelling ownership by 2021.

Working with the data available from the NRIS, the presumption is that there are 6,000 Roma families in Kosovo\*, 80% of which do not have ownership over the dwelling where they live and thus face evictions. The NRIS of Kosovo\* sets the target for 2021 to 60% illegal dwellings - a reduction by 20% (by legalisation of 1,200 housing units), which is further replicated for 2025 and for the time when Kosovo\* potentially accedes to the EU.

The NRIS is stipulating implementation of a programme for treating illegal buildings and making social housing available (by construction or identification and adaptation of existing buildings) at local level, including by utilising the [Law for Financing Specific Housing Programmes](#). However, the only activities reported for 2017 in housing by the Government of Kosovo\* are the assistance in reconstruction of houses for 84 families, accommodation of

331 families for 12 months and providing furniture for 33 families, within the programmes for returning of refugees. The report also says that the housing needs of 771 families are registered.

The Economic Reform Programme 2019-2021 of Kosovo\* is recognising the need for ensuring property rights by addressing informality in the immovable property sector, addressed with the [National Property Rights Strategy](#) and regulated primarily with the [Law on Treatment of Constructions without Permit](#).

According to the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning for Kosovo, a new [Law on Social Housing](#) is currently being drafted, and there is a need for technical and expert assistance in the process. Since the law on housing legalisation is not regulating the procedure in case of evictions of families from dwellings that cannot be legalised, the new law should be linked with the housing legalisation in order to trigger a necessary procedure to ensure accommodation of evicted families.

At the request of the Government of Kosovo\*, the Roma Integration action shall provide technical assistance for preparing the Law on Social Housing, linking it with the Law on Treatment of Objects without Permits, and developing of a full funding proposal through which it should be ensured that Roma are provided assistance for and access to housing legalisation and social housing is secured for families whose dwellings cannot be legalised.

