

The Roma

**Ministry of Justice:
Roundtable
discussion**

**Data collection on the
Roma in Finland - results
and recommendations**



Project Know Equality is supported by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) programme of the European Union (2014-2020).

Information is needed to make effective policies and actions.

Research data helps to improve the realisation of the rights of the Roma.

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This publication is based on a roundtable discussion organised by the Ministry of Justice in April 2022, which included discussion on data collection and research carried out among the Roma as well as the identified information needs and development targets.

The views presented in the publication are of those who participated in the discussion.

Current research methods do not provide sufficient up-to-date and comprehensive information on the Roma population in Finland. Notable improvements are needed in data collection and research concerning the Roma.

There is room for improvement in the inclusion of the Roma in research processes and the return of researched information to the community. Research data should be returned to those who participated in the studies and to the Roma community in general language. In addition, room should be made for researchers with a Roma background.

Challenges related to the current state

- **Current research** methods do not produce enough information on the Roma population. This applies to archive and population research, ethnographic research and the utilised interview and survey methods.
- **In the** current situation, the inclusion of the Roma in research processes requires ethical, methodological and qualitative development. In order to be able to speak about the inclusion of the Roma, the research field must first define exactly what Roma inclusion means.
- **The authors** of the studies do not always communicate clearly enough what the research results will be used for.
- **In the** current situation, the collected research data is often not returned to the Roma community. In addition, the community may feel that academic vocabulary, formal official language and the use of English are obscure and unappealing.
- **It is** difficult to find sufficiently large groups of respondents for Roma studies. A small group of respondents will not provide a realistic picture of the overall situation of the Roma. This makes it difficult to take the special needs of Roma individuals and group into account in varying life situations.
- **There are** challenges in recognising and acknowledging the status of researchers with a Roma background, as the academic world exhibits prejudices and exclusion, even outright racism.
- **Researchers from** the majority population may have a racialised and essentialising perception of the Roma.
- **The Roma** lack their own Roma-specific data collection, and its importance is not yet sufficiently appreciated by the scientific community.
- **Another challenge** is how to export researched information to both the field as well as decision-making bodies.

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Key recommendations

- **The Roma** should be involved in the study from the planning phase to implementation and the analysis of results. This will create a genuine opportunity for them to have an influence on the production of information.
- **Roma communities** should be more actively involved in producing information together with researchers. Inclusive methods must be considered in the planning and funding of the study.
- **Each phase** of the study must be respectful. The manner in which questions are set out, the approach and the perspective should be carefully considered.
- **The ownership** of the Roma population in the implementation of studies and the use of the results can be strengthened through training and communications.
- **The information** must be returned to the community in general language and in as approachable a form as possible.
- **The Roma** should not be studied as objects and as isolated subjects, but as part of society. When engaging in cooperation with the Roma, they should be seen as researchers and colleagues.
- **A key** factor is that the Roma and the Roma community who participate in the studies find them useful and central to their lives, and research settings or results are not interpreted as negatively stigmatising the Roma.
- **Room** should be made in the scientific community for researchers with a Roma background.
- **Racist research** traditions should be challenged and a focus should be placed on reformulating the methods used to approach the Roma population in research.
- **The critical** approach to Roma research

is preferable as it challenges traditional approaches. This will make it possible for the voice of the Roma to be heard as researchers and participants. An intersectional perspective is also necessary for taking different grounds for discrimination into account.

- **It is** important that the diverse voices, experiences and needs of the Roma are heard. Minorities within the minority should also be involved in research.
- **In order to** develop research on the Roma, information should also be collected on how the Roma who participated in the research perceive the research situation and what they feel they gain from the process.
 - **It is** necessary to produce further research data on the socio-economic status of Roma: How do racism and discrimination affect conflicts between the Roma, the Roma's access to services, opportunities for education, work and well-being.
 - **Within the** scope of the Roma study, it should be considered whether it is necessary to create ethical research principles specific to the Roma, as has been done in research on the Sámi.



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