European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), selection of relevant and recent passages from published reports related to Spain

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**This submission offers excerpts from FRA publications in the context of the “Call for submissions on Spain in advance of country visit” by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights.**

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# Annual Reports

## Fundamental Rights Report 2019 (June 2019)

<https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2019-fundamental-rights-report-2019_en.pdf>

### Chapter 8.1. Child poverty

“The percentage of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE) has decreased in the EU-28 since 2012. The AROPE indicator, which Eurostat provides, combines three different sub-indicators: ‘at risk of poverty’, ‘severe material deprivation’ and ‘very low household work intensity’. The AROPE rate for children in 2017 was 3.2 percentage points lower than during the peak of the economic crisis in 2012, Eurostat data published in 2018 show. In 2012, 28.1 % of children in the EU-28 were at risk of poverty or social exclusion; the rate dropped to 24.9 % by 2017. There are substantial differences between Member States. The AROPE rate in 2017 ranges from around 15 % for children in Czechia, Denmark, Finland and Slovenia to more than 30 % in **Spain**, Lithuania, Hungary and Italy, 36 % in Greece, and almost 42 % in Bulgaria and Romania.” (p. 179)

“In 2017, 32.5 % of children in the EU-28 with parents born in a foreign country were at risk of poverty. This proportion, in contrast to the general trend, had increased by 1 percentage point since 2016, according to the latest Eurostat data. As Figure 8.1 shows, the situation is even worse for children whose parents have a foreign citizenship: in 2017, 40.7 % of these children were at risk of poverty compared with 35.8 % in 2016, which represents an increase of nearly 5 percentage points. In comparison, the proportion at risk of poverty in 2017 was 17.1 % for children with parents born in the country of residence and 17.4 % for children with parents who have the citizenship of the reporting country. However, the risk of poverty for children as a function of their parents’ background varies considerably by country of residence.” (p. 180) [NB: the numbers for **Spain** are 23% for children with parents with Spanish citizenship, and 57% for children of parents with foreign citizenship. See: figure 8.1 on p. 181]

“The European Semester continues to give little consideration to child poverty, as past FRA fundamental rights reports pointed out. The only country-specific recommendation in 2018 directly related to child poverty addressed **Spain**; it underlined the need to improve family support and coverage gaps in income-guarantee schemes.” (p. 180)

“In **Spain**, the authorities have committed to adopting a new national strategic framework to combat poverty indicating the fight against child poverty as one of its main targets.” (p.181)

“Promising practice: Establishing a High Commissioner against Child Poverty

**Spain** created the Office of the High Commissioner against Child Poverty in June 2018, after the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child addressed recommendations on child poverty to **Spain** in March 2018. As part of its mandate to enhance public policy analysis and ensure best practic­es in fighting against child poverty, the office is developing a map of child poverty that provides a detailed description of the spatial distribution of child poverty in **Spain** at the census tract lev­el. The map database will merge income-related data with additional indicators, such as material deprivation and behavioural patterns, to improve understanding of the multidimensional nature of child poverty. The map will help to increase the efficacy of public policies by improving the tar­geting of measures to combat child poverty. It will also inform a set of policy interventions by the National Alliance to Fight Child Poverty, which the High Commissioner leads. The alliance promotes partnerships between the private sector and civil society.

*For more information, see the High Commissioner’s website and 2018 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Spain (paras 9(c), 26(b) and 35(c)).”* (p. 182)

“The SDG framework calls on governments to design and implement national policies that link social sustainability with the fight against poverty, including child poverty. The majority of the [Voluntary National Review] reports that EU Member States have submitted since 2016 include such references. For example, the reports by Belgium, Cyprus, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugaland **Spain** contain comprehensive overviews and detailed information on their actions in fighting child poverty.” (p. 182)

## Fundamental Rights Report 2018 (June 2018)

<https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-fundamental-rights-report-2018_en.pdf>

### Chapter 1.1. Ageism and its effects on the individual, the group and society as a whole

“The EU average risk of poverty for those 65 or older is lower than that for the total population – 14.6 % and 17.3 %, respectively. However, the situation varies significantly across countries. In Latvia and Estonia, for example, the proportion of people aged 65 and above at risk of poverty is 16 to 19 percentage points higher than that for the population as a whole. In contrast, in **Spain** and Greece, the proportion of older persons at risk of poverty is around nine percentage points lower than that of the total population. These variations reflect differences in the pension and social protection systems in the Member States and in the kind and extent of support provided by families and the state.” (p. 13)

### Chapter 5.2. Overview of the fundamental rights situation of Roma

“Overall, key employment indicators have not improved, a comparison of FRA survey results from 2011 and 2016 shows. The proportion of Roma in paid work remains at only 25 %, and the average percentage of Roma women in paid work is nearly half that of Roma men. Linked to the limited improvements in employment, the overwhelming majority of Roma remain at risk of poverty despite small improvements (80 % in 2016, compared with 86 % in 2011). Country differences are important: whereas the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Romania saw improvements in the rate of Roma at risk of poverty, this rate increased in Greece and in **Spain**. The severity of the situation becomes even more striking when compared with the national at-risk-of-poverty rates for the general population, which remained between 10 % and 25 % across Member States from 2011 to 2016. The situation of Roma is alarming, including in light of SDG 1 on ending poverty in all its forms everywhere.” (p. 104)

“Local-level actions to improve labour market inclusion continue. For example, the Acceder and *Aprender Trabajando* programmes continued in **Spain**.” (p. 104)

### Chapter 8.1. Tackling child poverty and social exclusion

“In **Spain**, the government approved a decree with measures to protect mortgage debtors in particularly vulnerable situations, such as households with children, single-parent households and large families. Measures include suspending eviction for up to four years. Problems with evictions in **Spain**, however, have prompted severe criticism from civil society and international human rights bodies. In 2017, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights indicated that **Spain** had violated the right to housing in the case of a family with two young children, who were evicted from a rented room in a flat without being provided with alternative housing. In addition, the Supreme Court declared the eviction of a family with three children in Madrid inappropriate until protection measures for the children were established, and required the previous instance to revise the eviction decision.” (pp. 180-181)

“Promising practice: Private sector tackles energy poverty

A private gas company in **Spain**, Gas Fenosa, developed an action plan in 2017. It contains 20 measures to address energy poverty, and has a budget of € 4.5 million. The measures include a free-of-charge phone number with 24-hour support for clients in vulnerable situations and the establishment of a so-called Energy School. The courses at the Energy School target social work­ers working with families and answer questions such as how to read the bill, reduce the total due amount, reduce energy use or request a deadline extension to pay the bill.

Gas Fenosa also offers a discount of between 25 % and 40 % to clients who fulfil certain need criteria: disability, families with more than three children, long-term unemployed people, etc. For certain categories of persons at risk of social exclusion, the energy supply cannot be interrupt­ed even when bills are not paid.

*For more information, see Gas Fenosa’s foundation’s website.*” (p. 181)

# Thematic Reports

## Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey: Roma – Selected Findings (November 2016)

<https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2016-eu-minorities-survey-roma-selected-findings_en.pdf>

“Overall, 80 % of the Roma surveyed and their children live with an income below the respective national at-risk-of-poverty threshold. In comparison, on average across the EU, 17 % of the population was at risk of poverty in 2014. In **Spain** (98 %), Greece (96 %) and Croatia (93 %), almost the entire Roma population covered by the survey has incomes below the national income poverty threshold.” (p. 14)

“In most countries, the proportion of Roma at risk of poverty is highest in neighbourhoods that respondents assess to be populated by residents who are “all” or “most” of Roma background. Greece and **Spain** are the exception – in these Member States, the risk of poverty is particularly high but not substantially different across neighbourhoods.” (p. 14)

“Compared with the 2011 survey findings, the proportion of Roma living in households in which at least one person went to bed hungry at least once in the previous month declined in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania. It did not change in Greece, Slovakia and **Spain**.” (p. 16)

“Self-declared employment rates of Roma are highest in Greece (43%), followed by Hungary (36%) and Portugal (34%). The lowest rates are observed in Croatia (8%) and **Spain** (16 %). One third of the surveyed Roma household members (34%) declare themselves to be ‘unemployed’, with shares above 50% in Croatia (62%), **Spain** (57%) and Bulgaria (55%).” (p. 17)

“In all countries, a substantial gender gap was observed, with the biggest differences in Greece (22% of Roma women in paid work compared with 82% of Roma men), followed by Romania (27% versus 64%). The smallest gender gap was observed in **Spain**, where 16% of Roma women and 31% of Roma men were in paid work in the previous four weeks.” (p. 20)

“The results show that 95% to 98% of Roma in **Spain**, Portugal and Slovakia are covered either by the national basic health insurance scheme or additional insurance.” (p. 29)

“Nearly all Roma live in households with electricity supply in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, **Spain** and Hungary (97-98 %).” (p. 33)

## Combating child poverty: an issue of fundamental rights (October 2018)

<https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-combating-child-poverty_en.pdf>

“FRA’s data also show that between 16% (**Spain**) and 48% (Greece) of Roma children live in households where at least one person went to bed hungry at least once in the month before the data were collected.” (p. 7)

“[National] disparities mirror the different impacts of the economic crisis on each country and of the policy responses implemented in each case by the authorities. In Romania (49.2%) and Bulgaria (45.6%), almost half of all children were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2016. More than 30% of children were at risk of poverty or social exclusion in countries such as Greece (37.5%), Hungary (33.6%), Italy (33.2%), **Spain** (32.9%) and Lithuania (32.4%).” (p. 15)

“One [country-specific recommendation in the context of the European Semester] related to child poverty is addressed to **Spain** and underlines the need to improve family support and coverage gaps in income guarantee schemes;” (p. 42)