

Ten Frequent Mistakes Made by Stakeholders Working with Roma and Sinti Adults in Education and Social Services

European policy documents consistently stress **equality, inclusion, participation, anti-discrimination, trust-building, inclusive education, and an intersectional approach** in work with Roma and Sinti communities. The ten mistakes below summarize the most common opposite tendencies found in practice: stereotyping, paternalism, fragmentation, assimilationism, and weak participation. These issues are directly at odds with the priorities set by the **EU Roma Strategic Framework 2020–2030**, the **Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion 2020–2025**, and recent **FRA Roma Survey** findings.

The 10 most frequent mistakes

1. **Treating Roma and Sinti as a homogeneous group**
2. **Designing interventions for them, but not with them**
3. **Explaining problems only in cultural terms**
4. **Confusing inclusion with assimilation**
5. **Focusing only on children and neglecting adults**
6. **Working through fragmented services instead of integrated pathways**
7. **Reading mistrust, lateness, or discontinuity as lack of motivation**
8. **Using mediation only symbolically or occasionally**
9. **Ignoring gender, age, poverty, and multiple discrimination**
10. **Evaluating success through paternalistic or weak indicators only**

20 sample questionnaire items for stakeholders

Use a 5-point Likert scale: **1 = strongly disagree** to **5 = strongly agree**.

1. I take into account differences among Roma and Sinti families, subgroups, and individual life paths.
2. I avoid making professional judgments based on general assumptions about Roma or Sinti people.
3. I actively involve Roma and Sinti adults in defining the goals of the interventions that concern them.
4. Roma and Sinti adults participate in decisions in a real, not merely formal, way.
5. When difficulties arise, I consider social, economic, and institutional factors, not only cultural ones.

6. I avoid automatically interpreting problems as a consequence of Roma or Sinti culture.
7. Inclusion should not require people to renounce their identity.
8. I promote access to rights without expecting full conformity to majority lifestyles.
9. Work with Roma and Sinti adults should include autonomy, adult learning, and empowerment.
10. In my professional setting, adults receive as much attention as minors.
11. My professional context ensures coordination among education, welfare, health, housing, and employment services.
12. I try to address multiple dimensions of need instead of treating each one separately.
13. When a person disengages, I also consider possible past discrimination or mistrust of institutions.
14. I avoid interpreting absences, delays, or resistance as simple lack of interest.
15. In my service, cultural mediation plays a concrete role in decision-making and relationships.
16. Mediation should be considered a structural resource, not an occasional one.
17. I consider how gender, age, poverty, health, and education shape different experiences among Roma and Sinti adults.
18. I pay attention to the fact that some people experience multiple forms of disadvantage at the same time.
19. When I evaluate an intervention, I also consider empowerment, continuity, quality of relationships, and access to rights.
20. Attendance and rule compliance alone are not sufficient indicators of success.

Selected European bibliography

- **European Commission.** (2020). *EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2020–2030*.
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- **Council of Europe.** (2020). *Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020–2025)*.
- **European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA).** (2025). *Perspectives from the Roma Survey 2024*.
- **European Commission.** (2022). *National Roma and Sinti Equality, Inclusion and Participation Strategic Framework: Italy 2021–2030*.