

Roma Influencers Network - breaking the circle of early marriages and early motherhood in Roma communities

ERASMUS +

# National Report on Early Marriages and Early Motherhood in Roma Communities

Romania

Final Report

Author: CESIS – Centro de Estudos para a Intervenção Social

Leader of WP2– Breaking the circle of early marriages and early motherhood in Roma communities

## Content

I. Introduction.....	4
I.1. The Roma Influencers Network Project.....	4
I.2. Early marriage and early motherhood: Global concerns.....	5
II. Framework on early marriage and early motherhood at a national level.....	8
II.1. Romanian National Legal Framework.....	8
II. 1.1. About the concepts.....	8
II.1.2. Law and policy in Romania.....	9
II.1.2.1. International Conventions and orientations.....	9
II. 1.2.2. Romanian National legislative framework.....	11
II.1.3. National policies and projects covering early marriage and early motherhood.....	14
II. 2. What it is known about early marriage and early motherhood.....	18
II. 2.1. What figures are saying.....	18
II. 2.2. About the reality of early marriage and early motherhood.....	20
II.3. Roma communities in Romania.....	22
II.3.1. General characterisation of Roma communities.....	22
II.3.2. Early marriage and early motherhood among Roma communities in Romania.....	24
III. Listening Roma people – Field work research with Roma women on early marriage and early motherhood.....	27
III.1. The Roma Influencers Network Research Methodology.....	27
III. 2. Characterisation of the participants in the interviews.....	28
III. 3. What women say about (early) marriage.....	30
III. 4. Motherhood.....	36
III. 5. Became a mother - feelings and changes.....	41
III. 6. The relevance of information.....	43
III. 7. Preventing early marriage and early motherhood.....	46
References.....	49



ROMA INFLUENCERS NETWORK/2024-1-EL01-KA220-ADU-000247507



www.romainfluencersnetwork.eu

romainfluencersnetwork@gmail.com



Roma Influencers Network



Roma\_Influencers\_Network

## Figures

Figure 1 -Age group of the Roma women interviewed (Absolut numbers).....	29
Figure 2 - Marital status of the Roma women interviewed (Absolut numbers) .....	30
Figure 5 – Family reactions to marriage (%).....	34
Figure 6 – Perceptions of changes in life after marriage (%) .....	35
Figure 7 – Age of women at the birth of their first child (%) .....	37
Figure 8 – Age preference for first-time motherhood by age group of Roma women (%) .....	37
Figure 9 – Reasons for wanting to have children later in life (%) .....	38
Figure 10 – Reaction of the family to the pregnancy (%).....	39
Figure 11 - What it was like to become a mother (%).....	41
Figure 12 – Changes in life after motherhood (%) .....	43
Figure 13 - Reasons for not attending hospital/medical appointments (%).....	45
Figure 14 - Reasons for not attending prenatal classes (%) .....	46

### I.1. The Roma Influencers Network Project

This national report is related to **Romania**.

## I.2. Early marriage and early motherhood: Global concerns

Early marriage and early motherhood remain urgent global challenges. Both the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), along with other key research organizations such as the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and Girls Not Brides, have extensively documented the causes and consequences related to these practices.

UNICEF (2023) defines child marriage as any formal marriage or informal union involving a child under the age of 18 and it estimates that approximately 12 million girls are married before reaching that age limit each year, many of whom become mothers shortly thereafter.

Early marriage and early motherhood are particularly prevalent in low- and middle-income countries, where gender inequality, poverty and lack of education combine to undermine the rights and futures of millions of girls. However, it also remains a problem in Europe, where it varies considerably between regions. Eastern European countries such as Bulgaria and Romania report higher rates of teenage births. For example, in 2021 Bulgaria had the highest teenage birth rate in Europe. If we consider the age between 10 and 14 years, the rate is 1.6‰ in Bulgaria and 1.45‰ in Romania. The rates increase when the age group 15-19 is considered: 38.7‰ and 33.89‰ respectively. 10.2‰ of all births in the country, while Romania reported that 12.3‰ of first births were to teenage mothers in 2015.<sup>1</sup>

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), complications related to pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death among girls aged 15-19 years worldwide. Due to their physical immaturity, adolescent mothers are at greater risk of life-

<sup>1</sup> Source: Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs and United Nations Population Fund . [OurWorldinData.org/maternal-mortality](https://ourworldindata.org/maternal-mortality).



ROMA INFLUENCERS NETWORK/2024-1-EL01-KA220-ADU-000247507



threatening complications such as obstructed labour and obstetric fistula. Their children are also more likely to be born prematurely, with low birth weight or with neonatal health problems.

The consequences of early motherhood are not limited to health. UNICEF (2023) emphasises that early marriage often leads to the termination of a girl's education and the loss of her autonomy and economic opportunities. Girls are also often isolated from their peers, subjected to domestic violence and forced into lifelong dependency.

These observations are supported by evidence from the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW). Jain and Kurz (2007) argue that early marriage is deeply embedded in social norms and economic insecurity, and stress the need for comprehensive, multi-sectoral approaches that include education, community mobilisation and economic incentives for families. More recently, organizations such as Girls Not Brides (2020) further highlight the social and cultural drivers of child marriage. This organization identifies poverty, insecurity, and lack of educational access as major risk factors and calls for localized, culturally sensitive solutions.

In its State of World Population 2013 report, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) explores how adolescent pregnancy often reflects deep-seated gender inequalities (UNFPA, 2013). This in turn points to the need for structural change - changing the environment in which girls live, and the expectations placed on them - and the promotion of human and women's rights.

Collectively, these institutions and researchers converge on key conclusions: early marriage and early motherhood are driven by intersecting factors, including gender discrimination, poverty and social norms. The consequences are far-reaching, affecting girls' health, education, autonomy and future prospects. Effective solutions must





## II. Framework on early marriage and early motherhood at a national level

### II.1. Romanian National Legal Framework

#### II. 1.1. About the concepts

Romanian legislation does not explicitly and separately define the concepts of child marriage, early marriage and forced marriage, but they can be deduced from the general provisions of national legislation. Romanian Civil Code, Law no. 272/2004 on child protection and Law no. 217/2003 on preventing and combating domestic violence provide some highlights about these concepts.

Child marriage is a legal or socially recognised union between persons under the age of 18. It is permitted by law only in justified cases, with strict restrictions, but is considered the exception rather than the rule. According to Article 272 of the Civil Code, the minimum legal age for marriage is 18, but it can be reduced to 16 with parental consent and court approval in justified cases. This reduction is allowed only in special circumstances, which must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Early marriage, on the other hand, includes all legal or traditional unions contracted before the emotional, physical and social maturity of the parties, even if the legal minimum age is respected.

This concept is not clearly defined, but legislation promotes prevention through education and social protection. Compulsory education up to the age of 18, as referred to in the National Education Act (Act No. 1/2011) and protection against dropping out



of school for further education (Act No. 272/2004) are ways of preventing early marriage situations.

Finally, forced marriage is a union in which at least one of the parties is forced into marriage through violence, threats, manipulation or other forms of pressure.

## II.1.2. Law and policy in Romania

### II.1.2.1. International Conventions and orientations

Romania has ratified several international conventions that directly or indirectly contribute to the fight against early motherhood and forced marriages.

One of the most important in terms of defending children's rights from a comprehensive perspective is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)<sup>2</sup>. The CRC was ratified on 20 November 1989 by Law 18/1990, which entered into force on 27 June 1990. This ratification marked the country's commitment to bringing national legislation into line with international standards for the protection and promotion of children's rights<sup>3</sup>.

The Istanbul Convention<sup>4</sup> was ratified in Romania by Law No. 30/2016<sup>5</sup>, which entered into force on 1 September 2016, demonstrating Romania's commitment to international

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

<sup>3</sup> Parliament of Romania. (1990) Law no. 18/1990 on the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Monitorul Oficial. Available at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/761>

<sup>4</sup> Council of Europe (2011). Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. <https://rm.coe.int/168046253e>

<sup>5</sup> Romanian Parliament. (2016). Law No 30/2016 on the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. Monitorul Oficial. <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/176888>

standards for preventing and combating gender-based violence, including forced marriage<sup>6</sup>.

Romania is also aware of the Resolution on Child, Early and Forced Marriages<sup>7</sup> adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 14 December 2014. This resolution urges States to eliminate early and forced marriages through legislative, educational and social measures, as well as by adapting national legislation to ensure effective protection of victims. Romania has not directly transposed this resolution into specific legislation, but its provisions are reflected in the existing national legal framework that protects children's rights and combats harmful practices such as early and forced marriages.

<sup>6</sup> Consiliul European. (2011). *Convenția de la Istanbul privind prevenirea și combaterea violenței împotriva femeilor și a violenței domestice*. <https://rm.coe.int/168046253e>

<sup>7</sup> United Nations (2014) Resolution on child, early and forced marriage.  
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2018-0187\\_RO.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2018-0187_RO.html)

ROMA INFLUENCERS NETWORK/2024-1-EL01-KA220-ADU-000247507



## II. 1.2.2. Romanian National legislative framework

One of the most important pieces of legislation for the protection of children in Romania, inspired by the basic principles of the CRC, is Law No. 272/2004.<sup>8</sup>

This law provides a solid framework for the protection of children from abuse, including forced marriages, and obliges public authorities - such as the General Directorates of Social Welfare and Child Protection (DGASPC) - to intervene promptly in cases of violation of children's rights.

The law provides for the implementation of a preventive approach by promoting access to education, psychological counselling and social support for children and families in vulnerable situations.

Another important aspect of this law is that it emphasises the need for inter-institutional cooperation between local authorities, schools, health services and non-governmental organisations in order to provide coordinated support to children at risk.

Law No. 272/2004 was amended by Law No. 257/2013, which adds measures to specifically prevent early marriage and protect children in vulnerable situations. It introduces provisions for the development of specialised social services and the implementation of educational programmes to address the causes and effects of harmful practices.<sup>9</sup>

Law No. 217/2003<sup>10</sup> on the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence allows the police to immediately issue an order for the protection of victims of domestic violence. The law is one of the most effective in ensuring the immediate safety of victims. This law

<sup>8</sup> Romanian Parliament. (2004) Law no. 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of children's rights. Monitorul Oficial. Available at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/52909>

<sup>9</sup> Parlamentul României (2014). LEGE nr. 272 din 21 iunie 2004 (\*\*republicată\*\*) privind protecția și promovarea drepturilor copilului <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/156097>

<sup>10</sup> Romanian Parliament. (2003) Law 217/2003 on preventing and combating domestic violence. Monitorul Oficial. <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/44014>

also explicitly includes forced marriages as a form of gender-based violence, provides clarity on sanctions and has established specialised centres to provide psychological, legal and social support to victims of domestic violence and forced marriages.

Through the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, Law No. 30/2016<sup>11</sup> recognises forced marriage as a serious form of violence against women and establishes strict penalties for forced marriage. The law introduced gender and anti-stereotyping education programmes in school curricula, as well as public campaigns to prevent gender-based violence and harmful practices such as forced marriage. Training for police, legal and social service personnel has become a priority to improve the institutional response to these issues.

The Romanian Civil Code<sup>12</sup> strengthens the rights of children with regard to the protection of the family and their welfare. It explicitly provides for protection against abuse, exploitation and neglect. Article 272 sets the minimum age for marriage at 18, except in justified cases where it can be reduced to 16, but only with parental consent and court approval. An official statement from the parents or legal guardians giving their consent to the marriage is required. The court must consider whether there are reasonable grounds for allowing the marriage. Reasons may include pregnancy or other circumstances that indicate that the marriage is in the best interests of the minor. In some cases, a medical examination may be required to confirm the physical and psychological maturity of the minor.

The Romanian Civil Code also provides for free and informed consent, meaning that any marriage must be entered into with the consent of both parties, freely expressed, without pressure or coercion. Forced marriages are strictly prohibited and violations of

<sup>11</sup> Romanian Parliament. (2016). Law No 30/2016 on the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. Monitorul Oficial. <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/176888>

<sup>12</sup> Romanian Parliament. (2009). Civil Code of Romania. Official Gazette. Accessed at: <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/109884>

these rules are punishable by law. These provisions underline the importance of protecting the autonomy of the persons involved and respecting their fundamental rights.

It should be noted that the Romanian State guarantees free access to primary and secondary education for all children, in accordance with the Constitution and the National Education Law 1/2011<sup>13</sup>. The focus is on the prevention of early school leaving, especially in vulnerable communities, where early marriage is a major contributor to early school leaving.

Finally, the Romanian Penal Code criminalises child abuse, labour exploitation and forced marriages and promotes strict sanctions for violations of these rights<sup>14</sup>.

Despite the legal framework, implementation of these measures to effectively combat early marriage and early motherhood remains a challenge, particularly in vulnerable communities where cultural and economic norms serve to complicate implementation.. Lack of access to education, low awareness and limited resources remain major obstacles to effectively addressing these issues.

<sup>13</sup> Romanian Parliament: Law 1/2011 on National Education (2011)

<https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/259001>

<sup>14</sup> Romanian Parliament. (2009) Romanian Penal Code - Law 286/2009. Official Gazette

<https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/109854>

### II.1.3. National policies and projects covering early marriage and early motherhood

Romania has a National Strategy on Promoting Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence (2021-2027)<sup>15</sup>, elaborated by the Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity. This Strategy places significant emphasis on subjects that are of particular relevance to the Roma Influencers Network project, including the promotion of equal access to education for girls and boys. Education, and more specifically the prevention of school dropout, are considered inhibiting factors for early marriage and yearly motherhood. Conversely, the notion of equitable access to education is predicated on the elimination of gender stereotypes. The Strategy is also oriented towards the cultural norms that perpetuate harmful practices, such as early marriage, and the promotion of awareness campaigns directed at women.

The National Strategy on Promoting Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence (2021-2027) also addresses the issues of yearly marriage and yearly motherhood with regard to the support of victims of gender-based violence. This support encompasses measures designed to assist women and girls who have been subjected to forced marriages or early motherhood, a phenomenon that is often precipitated by social or economic pressures.

With regard to Roma women, the Strategy expressly acknowledges their circumstances in the context of promoting equal opportunities. They are designated as a priority group, and their heightened vulnerability is characterised by intersectional discrimination,

<sup>15</sup> National Strategy on Promoting Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment between Women and Men and Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence for the Period 2022-2027. (2022). Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity.  
[https://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/MMPS/Transparenta\\_decizionala/09032021Anexa\\_1\\_SNESVD\\_cu\\_ANDPDCA\\_CNPP\\_29\\_01.pdf](https://www.mmuncii.ro/j33/images/Documente/MMPS/Transparenta_decizionala/09032021Anexa_1_SNESVD_cu_ANDPDCA_CNPP_29_01.pdf)



whereby gender stereotypes and ethnic prejudice are compounded by a restriction in access to education and services.

Furthermore, Romania has formulated its National Strategy for the Integration of Roma Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority (2022-2027). The overarching objective of this National Strategy is twofold: firstly, to reduce the social exclusion of Roma communities, and secondly, to improve their access to services and resources through integrated measures. The primary objectives are as follows:

- i) Education: Increase the participation of Roma children in the education system and reduce early school leaving, and promote equal access to education, including by supporting children in marginalised areas. Measures such as mentoring programmes, scholarships and supporting children from disadvantaged communities are planned.
- ii) Health: Improving access to primary health care and disease prevention among Roma communities. To achieve this goal, the strategy refers to the role of health mediators.
- iii) Location: Reduce overcrowding and improve housing conditions through infrastructure programmes and access to utilities (water, sewerage, electricity).
- iv) Employment: To support the integration of Roma into the labour market through vocational training programmes and the promotion of entrepreneurship.
- v) Fight discrimination: Reduction of prejudice and stereotypes through awareness campaigns and the creation of mechanisms for reporting and combating discrimination.

Women and children, especially girls, are the main target groups of this strategy. With regard to these specific groups, the priorities are related to the prevention of early marriage, the reduction of school drop-out rates and labour market integration.



Despite these achievements, the implementation of the Strategy reveals some challenges, namely: uneven implementation of measures across regions and localities; lack of adequate financial resources for all communities; and persistent prejudices in certain areas that limit the integration of Roma people.

In the area of health, the National Action Plan for Child Health<sup>17</sup> promotes the reduction of child mortality and the improvement of the health of children in marginalised communities. Children, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have the right to free access to basic health care.

In addition to these national strategies and plans, there are several governmental and non-governmental initiatives in Romania aimed at preventing early marriage and early motherhood, especially among vulnerable communities such as the Roma.

Some of those governmental initiatives are:

- Health mediator programme<sup>18</sup> coordinated by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. This national programme uses mediators to support vulnerable girls and families in accessing education and health services. These

<sup>16</sup> National Institute of Statistics - Romania (2024). *Demographic Events in 2023*. Available at: [https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/evenimente\\_demografice\\_in\\_anul\\_2023.pdf](https://insse.ro/cms/sites/default/files/field/publicatii/evenimente_demografice_in_anul_2023.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Ministry of Family, Youth, and Equal Opportunities (2023). NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUARANTEE FOR CHILDREN (NAP). Available at: <https://copii.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Plan-national-Garantie-aprobat-site.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Health (2021). Health Mediators Program. Retrieved from <https://ms.ro>.

mediators play an important role in raising awareness among families about the risks of early motherhood and the benefits of education for girls.

- The Ministry of Education's School after School Programme<sup>19</sup>, aims to prevent school dropout and provide a safe environment for children. By extending schooling, it creates opportunities for further education and reduces social pressure on girls to marry.

Non-governmental organisations have also launched projects and campaigns targeting Roma women and girls.

One of them is the project "One step forward - Empowering young people and women from local Roma communities"<sup>20</sup>, developed by Sastipen, an NGO with extensive experience in developing and implementing projects/programmes targeting Roma communities. This project aims to empower Roma women and girls from vulnerable communities by promoting their access to education, health and fundamental rights. This initiative aimed to strengthen the ability of Roma women to influence decisions affecting their personal and community lives, emphasising the importance of education and active participation in society. Sastipen has also implemented projects aimed at preventing absenteeism and early school leaving, recognising that education is a key factor in reducing early marriage and improving the living conditions of Roma communities.

Another project is "Campaigning for Roma Women's Rights", <sup>21</sup> developed by the association E-Romnja, a Roma feminist, apolitical and non-profit organisation that fights

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Education (2016) School after School Program. Retrieved from <https://www.edu.ro/scoala-dupa-scoala>

<sup>20</sup> Sastipen (n.d.). A step forward - Empowering young people and women in local Roma communities. Retrieved from <https://sastipen.ro/ro/proiecte-incheiate/astep/campanii-empowering/imputernicirea-femeilor-romi/>

<sup>21</sup> E-Romnja. (n.d.). Projects and campaigns for Roma women's rights. Retrieved from <https://e-romnja.ro>.



ROMA INFLUENCERS NETWORK/2024-1-EL01-KA220-ADU-000247507



Another recent campaign was "Not before 18!"<sup>22</sup>, run by organisations such as UNICEF and Save the Children, which promotes children's rights and encourages postponing marriage until the age of majority.

Documentaries, debates and educational programmes have also been broadcast on national channels to combat stereotypes about early marriage.

## II. 2.1. What figures are saying

Recent statistics on the number of marriages under the age of 18 by sex are not publicly available. However, the number of marriages under the age of 20 by sex can be highlighted.

<sup>22</sup> Save the Children - project to reduce underage pregnancy. <https://mameminore.ro/salvati-copiii-proiect-de-reducere-a-sarcinilor-in-randul-minorelor-in-judetul-cu-931-de-mame-adolescente/>

In 2023, a total of 5,227 girls were married before the age of 20. This represents a decrease since 2021, when a total of 5,767 girls were registered. The phenomenon is much less pronounced among the young male population. Taking into account the age of the husbands aged under 20, the total number of girls in the same age group was 653 in 2023<sup>23</sup>.

Statistical information also shows a preponderance of marriages under the age of 20 in urban areas and among certain vulnerable communities, including Roma communities. NGOs and international institutions have reported these cases and have initiated programmes to raise awareness and prevent early marriage.

According to official data published by the National Institute of Statistics (INS), in 2023 in Romania, a total of 648 births were registered to mothers under 15 years of age and 14,714 to mothers between 15 and 19 years of age. Taking into account underage fathers aged between 15 and 19, a total of 2,339 girls of the same age gave birth and a total of 157 under 15<sup>24</sup>.

According to general data, about 7-9% of newborns in Romania are born weighing less than 2,500 grams, classified as low birth weight, but it is not possible to know any possible correlation with the age of their mothers.

It is known that early marriage and early motherhood are significant phenomena in Roma communities, which are much more common than in the general population. This phenomenon is influenced by cultural, economic and educational factors.

<sup>23</sup> National statistical databases TEMPO - <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

<sup>24</sup> National statistical databases TEMPO - <http://statistici.insse.ro:8077/tempo-online/#/pages/tables/insse-table>

According to the FRA's EU-MIDIS II: *Report on Minorities and Discrimination in the EU - Results for Roma*<sup>25</sup>, there were 1,680 marriages among Roma girls aged 14-17 between 2012 and 2014.

In terms of early motherhood, the 2018 data shows an increase in the proportion of pregnancies before the age of 18, from 30.6% for women aged 25-29 to 37.1% for those aged 20-24, according to the study above<sup>26</sup>.

In 2015, 628 births to girls under the age of 15 were reported by the National Institute of Statistics<sup>27</sup>.

Specific data on the birth weight of children born to Roma mothers are limited. However, poor socio-economic conditions, poor access to health services and a high incidence of early pregnancy may contribute to a higher prevalence of low birth weight in these communities. General studies suggest that teenage mothers are at increased risk of having low birthweight babies, and this risk may be greater in Roma communities where early motherhood is more frequent.

## II. 2.2. About the reality of early marriage and early motherhood

A study conducted by Save the Children in 2024 (Study on underage mothers and underage pregnant women - Research Report) 28 collected information based on self-

<sup>25</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). (2016). EU-MIDIS II: Report on minorities and discrimination in the EU - Results for Roma. Available at: <https://fra.europa.eu>

<sup>26</sup> Stiri pentru Viață. (2018). Early marriages in Roma communities: Causes and effects. Available at: <https://stiripentruviata.ro>

<sup>27</sup> Eurostat (2014) Statistics on teenage birth rates in the European Union. Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

<sup>28</sup> Save the Children (2024). Study on underage mothers and underage pregnant women - Research Report. Available at: <https://www.salvaticopiii.ro/sites/ro/files/2024-04/studiu-privind-mamele-minore.pdf>



ROMA INFLUENCERS NETWORK/2024-1-EL01-KA220-ADU-000247507





reporting by participants. The study was based on a nationwide opinion survey of mothers and pregnant teenage girls conducted between October and December 2023. The sample included 200 young women who were either mothers or pregnant. The interviews were conducted in 172 localities across the country.

The study reports that Romania has one of the highest rates of early motherhood in Europe, with 34 births per 1,000 teenagers aged 15-19. This statistic places the country at the top of the European league table for teenage births, well above the EU average. Although teenage pregnancy among under-15s is less common, it is not non-existent and is a worrying phenomenon. The incidence of early motherhood is higher in rural areas, where access to education and health services is significantly lower.

According to the same study, most pregnant teenagers (80%) and underage mothers were aged between 16 and 17. About 20% of underage pregnant girls were under 16, and in two cases (2%) pregnancy occurred in girls who had just turned 14 before that age. The teenage girls affected by early motherhood come from disadvantaged backgrounds and rural communities. Most of the pregnant teenagers were in the second half of their pregnancy, with a gestational age of more than five months.

In terms of ethnic distribution, 58% of the participants in the study were of Romanian ethnicity and 40% of Roma ethnicity, and most of them dropped out of school before completing compulsory education. This phenomenon is closely linked to poverty, limited access to education and the persistence of cultural norms that support early marriage.

In some communities, early marriage is seen as a way of reducing the economic burden on the family. At the same time, the lack of sexual and reproductive education programmes contributes to a lack of information among young women, leading to unplanned pregnancies and forced marriages.

he consequences are many and serious. According to the study, girls who become mothers at a young age are at greater risk of medical complications, including premature and low-birth-weight babies. They are also more likely to be exposed to domestic violence and abuse. In addition, these practices perpetuate the cycle of poverty by limiting girls' access to education and economic opportunities.

However, a recent study has identified several solutions to combat this phenomenon<sup>29</sup>. First, implementing sexual and reproductive education programmes in schools can significantly reduce early marriage rates. Secondly, it is essential to develop social support networks, including health mediators, in vulnerable communities. Awareness campaigns promoting gender equality and children's rights can also help change harmful cultural norms

## II.3. Roma communities in Romania

### II.3.1. General characterisation of Roma communities

There are an estimated 10-12 million Roma living in Europe, of whom around 6 million are EU citizens or residents. They are found in most European countries, with significant concentrations in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia. In Romania, according to the 2021 census, the Roma population will

<sup>29</sup> Organisation Salvati Copiii (2024). Study on underage mothers and underage pregnant women - Research Report. Available at: <https://www.salvaticopiii.ro/sites/ro/files/2024-04/studiu-privind-mamele-minore.pdf>



According to the *Report on Minorities and Discrimination in the EU - Results for Roma*, Roma communities in Romania generally have a young demographic structure, with a significant proportion of children and adolescents. Also, according to the 2021 census data, 52,940 Roma in Romania were aged between 15 and 19, and 46,502 were aged between 20 and 24<sup>31</sup>.

In terms of residential background, Roma live in both urban and rural areas, but often in poor conditions with limited access to basic infrastructure and services. The report of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)<sup>32</sup> indicates that many Roma live in dwellings without access to running water and other basic facilities

Roma participation in education remains below the average for the general population. Although enrolment rates in primary education have increased in recent years, dropout rates remain high, especially after completion of compulsory education. According to the same FRA report, only 15% of young Roma adults complete upper secondary education. Moreover, school segregation and discrimination remain major obstacles to equal access to education.

Roma face high rates of unemployment and significant difficulties in accessing the formal labour market. Discrimination, low levels of education and lack of professional qualifications contribute to their economic exclusion. The FRA report highlights that

<sup>32</sup> Ibidem.

Most of these difficulties are related to situations of discrimination against Roma. This discrimination is widespread across Europe. According to FRA surveys, four out of ten Roma have felt discriminated against at least once in the last five years, but only a small proportion have reported these incidents. A lack of awareness of rights and protection mechanisms against discrimination helps to perpetuate this situation.

Studies show a high prevalence of early marriage and early motherhood among Roma girls. According to the 2018 report *Early Marriages in Roma Communities: Causes and Effects*<sup>33</sup>, the proportion of young Roma girls marrying before the age of 20 has increased from 70 per cent for the 25-29 age group to 84 per cent for the 20-24 generation. The proportion of those marrying before the age of 18 has also increased from 44.6 per cent to 52.1 per cent among the same generations.

In terms of early motherhood, the data show an increase in the proportion of pregnancies before the age of 18, from 30.6% for women aged 25-29 to 37.1% for those aged 20-24.

These girls and women often live in marginalised rural or urban communities where cultural traditions and social norms encourage early marriage. Low levels of education

<sup>33</sup> Stiri pentru Viață. (2018). *Early marriages in Roma communities: Causes and effects*. Available at: <https://stiripentruviata.ro>

are common, with many of these girls dropping out of school to take on traditional roles as wives and mothers<sup>34</sup>.

The main reasons identified for early marriage and early motherhood among Roma women, according to Stiri pentru Viață (Viață, 2018) include:

- Cultural traditions: In many Roma communities, early marriage is a cultural norm, seen as a rite of passage into adulthood and a means of ensuring the protection and stability of girls.
- Poverty: Poor economic conditions mean that families see early marriage as a way of easing the financial burden and securing a future for their daughters.
- Lack of access to education: Limited access to education and opportunities for personal development contribute to the perpetuation of these practices, with girls lacking.

In many Roma communities, early marriage and motherhood are accepted and even encouraged as an integral part of cultural identity and traditions passed down through generations. However, there are also voices within the community that recognise the negative impact of these practices on girls' education and development and are advocating for change<sup>35</sup>.

Early marriage and early motherhood have multiple consequences in terms of health, education and poverty. In the area of health, girls who give birth at a young age are at increased risk of medical complications for themselves and their babies, including high

<sup>34</sup> MĂLINA VOICU RALUCA POPESCU. Quality of Life Magazine. BIRTH AND MARRIAGE AMONG THE ROMA POPULATION Jurnalul Olteniei. (2019). Stolen childhood: Roma saying no to early marriage. Available at: <https://www.jurnalulolteniei.ro>

<sup>35</sup> Jurnalul Olteniei. (2019). Copilărie furată: Romii care spun nu căsătoriilor timpurii. Available at: <https://www.jurnalulolteniei.ro>

maternal and infant mortality; in the area of education, early marriage and early motherhood lead to school dropout, limiting girls' access to education and thus to employment opportunities and economic independence; and in the area of poverty, these practices perpetuate the cycle of poverty, as children born to young mothers are more likely to live in poor economic conditions and to repeat the parental model, meaning the prevalence of intergenerational poverty.

To effectively address the phenomenon of early marriage and early motherhood in Roma communities, research suggests the following interventions:

- Education and awareness: Implement culturally appropriate sexual and reproductive education programmes that inform girls and their families about the risks and consequences of early marriage and pregnancy.
- Access to education: Creation of flexible educational opportunities, such as "second chance" programmes, to enable Roma girls to continue their education after dropping out of school.

Early marriage and early motherhood in Roma communities is a complex challenge influenced by cultural, economic and educational factors. Recent studies show that these practices perpetuate social vulnerability, limiting girls' access to education and economic opportunities, while exposing them to health risks and social exclusion. However, there is significant potential for change through measures such as culturally adapted education, improved access to health and social services, and the promotion of gender equality. Tackling these practices requires a coordinated effort involving the authorities, non-governmental organisations and the communities themselves to ensure a better future for girls and women in these communities.

### III. Listening Roma people – Field work research with Roma women on early marriage and early motherhood

In addition to the legal and policy framework of the subject, this national report also presents findings gathered directly from Roma women through face-to-face interviews. The primary aim of these interviews was to gather insights that help describe and analyse the practice of early marriage and early motherhood within Roma communities as it is foreseen in the project. These conversations provided valuable perspectives on the consequences of these practices, considering the various dimensions of women's lives.

In general, according to the evaluation of all project partners, the interview process was satisfactory/very satisfactory and went as expected. The tools used were also rated positively.

#### III.1. The Roma Influencers Network Research Methodology

In Romania, the project conducted a total of 50 interviews with Roma women. The target group consisted of Roma women aged 18 and over who were either married and/or had children. In order to reach this number, purposive sampling was the main method used to select participants. In addition, snowball sampling was used in some cases, where interviewees were asked to suggest other Roma women who might be willing to participate.



ROMA INFLUENCERS NETWORK/2024-1-EL01-KA220-ADU-000247507



Efforts were made to include women from different communities and neighbourhoods to reflect a wide range of experiences and contexts. Sastipen, as each project partner, used the most effective approach to identify and reach Roma women in their respective countries. Throughout the interview process, the principles of non-discrimination, privacy and anonymity were strictly adhered to. All interviews were conducted by women in order to create a more comfortable and trusting environment for the respondents.

Before and during the interviews, participants were fully informed about the purpose of the interview, how the data would be used, and their rights—including the right to skip any question or to end the interview at any time. The time and location of each interview were arranged in advance in consultation with the respondent.

A consent form, compliant with national data protection legislation, was signed by both the interviewer and the interviewee. In Romania these interviews took place in February 2025.

### III. 2. Characterisation of the participants in the interviews

As mentioned above, a total of 50 interviews were conducted with Roma women in Romania. Most of these women are under 30 years old (86%). In fact, the Romanian Roma interviewees are quite young, and no woman is 40 years old or older.

Roma Influencers  
Network

ROMA INFLUENCERS NETWORK/2024-1-EL01-KA220-ADU-000247507



**Κλίμακα**  
Φορέας Ανάπτυξης Ανθρώπινου  
& Κοινωνικού Κεφαλαίου  
για την Αντιμετώπιση  
του Κοινωνικού Αποκλεισμού



**Cairde**  
Challenging ethnic minority health inequalities

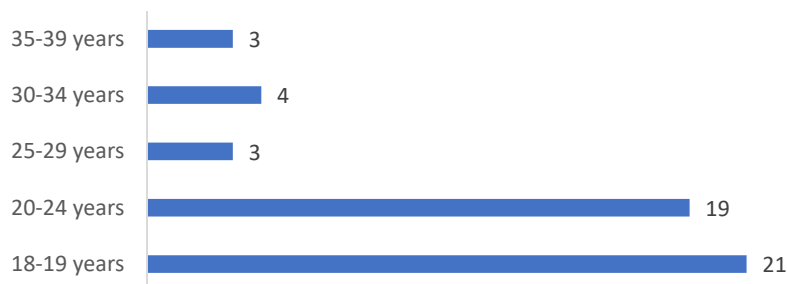
**Esis**  
CENTRO DE ESTUDOS  
INTERVENÇÃO  
SOCIAL



**SASTIPEN**



**Figure 1 -Age group of the Roma women interviewed (Absolut numbers)**



Regarding their living conditions:

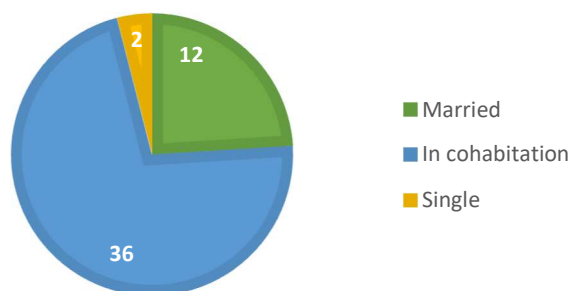
- Half of respondents live in urban areas and the other 50% live in rural areas.
- 40% live in precarious conditions and 34% in highly deprived homes and/or areas. A total of 26 per cent live in overcrowded accommodation.

The type of housing is mostly (44%) a precarious house in shantytowns, slums or degraded settlements and 36% live in a house/apartment in a social housing area. Only 20% of respondents reported living in a house/flat in conditions similar to those of the general population, in a rented house or in their own home.

The information collected on marital status shows that the majority of respondents (36 women - 72%) live with their spouse and 24% are married. Two women are single.



Figure 2 - Marital status of the Roma women interviewed (Absolut numbers)



Most respondents live with their husband or partner: 22 women (44%) live with their parents-in-law; 13 (26%) live in their own home with no other relatives apart from their children. A small percentage of women (7 women - 14%) live with both their husbands/partners and their own parents. There are also seven cases (14%) of extended families - where several family members live together, such as cousins, aunts, siblings or brothers-in-law. One single woman lives with her parents and children.

### III. 3. What women say about (early) marriage<sup>36</sup>

In the majority of cases (75%), there was no ceremony or civil registration to make the marriage official. Almost half of the married or cohabiting respondents reported that their marriage/cohabitation was celebrated according to Roma tradition. For the other half there was no kind of celebration.

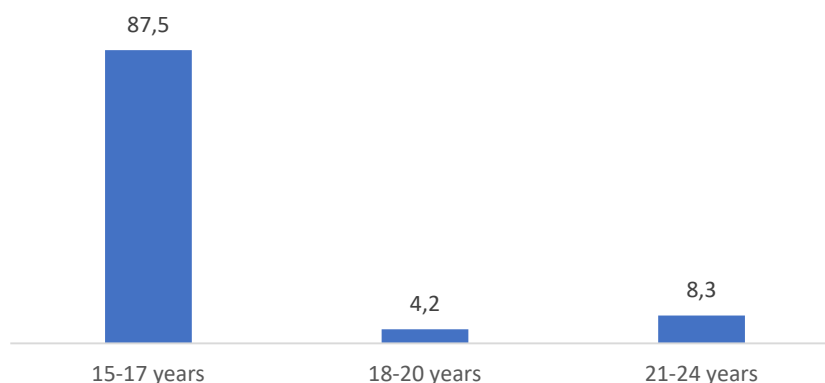
<sup>36</sup> Only responses from married (including widows) or in cohabitation women, i.e. 48, are included in this section.

The husbands are mostly (43 - 89.5%) also of Roma origin. The other five are mixed marriages, i.e. the men are not Roma.

In terms of how the Roma women surveyed met their husbands/partners, 12 women (25%) knew them from childhood and six met them at school. However, the most common answer (21 women - 43.8%) points to the importance of family in meeting future husbands or partners. A few others mentioned parties or living in the same neighbourhood.

The figure below shows that the vast majority of Roma women surveyed (42 women – 87,5%) were married/cohabited as minors, which means that these women would need parental consent under Romanian law if it were an official marriage. However, as shown above, most of these women live together and are not officially married, in any case they are in an early marriage situation, considering that this includes all legal or traditional unions contracted before the emotional, physical and social maturity of the parties.

**Figure 3 - Age of marriage/start of cohabitation (Absolut numbers)**



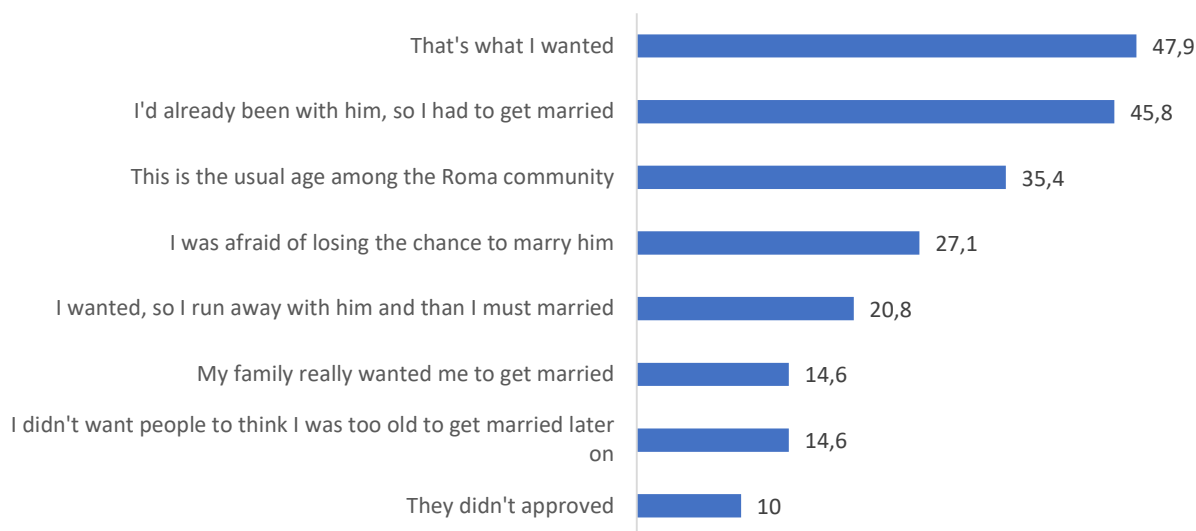
The reasons given for getting married or coming together at this specific age are mostly related to the willingness of these women (23 women - 47.9%), but also to the fact that these women had been with their husbands/partners before marriage (22 women -

45.8%). Fear of losing the chance to marry a certain boy (13 women - 27.1%) also justifies early marriage and sometimes running away. In fact, 10 (20.8%) of the women had run away before marriage - some of these women were already pregnant when they married/came together. Traditional norms restrict and condemn premarital relationships. To avoid community condemnation, the union must be formalised, even if only according to the community's internal norms.

Also, according to the respondents, marriage at a very early age is very common in Roma communities (17 women - 35.4%): *'So did my mother and my grandmother, so it seemed normal to me.'*

It should be noted that four girls mentioned poverty as a reason for marriage: *'My family was poor, and I thought I'd be better off.'* Roma Woman, 24 years.

Figure 4 - Reasons for marrying at this age (%) <sup>37</sup>



<sup>37</sup> Multiple answers.

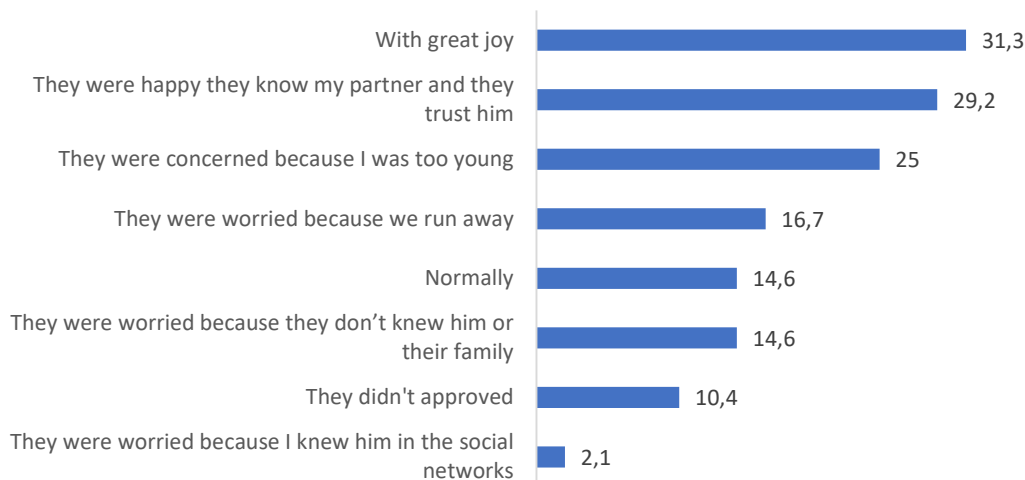
Despite their desire to marry, 29 women (60.4%) would wait a little longer to get married, especially those who marry between the ages of 15 and 17. Only one woman would choose to get married in a youngest age. The remaining respondents (20) said that they would get married at the same age, because: *if I had waited longer, I might not have found a good husband.*

Respondents reported different reactions from their families to their marriage or union: for 15 (31.3%) the reactions were joyful and happy because they already knew the boy and trusted him (14 women - 29.2%) and also because *I respected the customs of the community, and it was a marriage according to our tradition.*

However, there are also reports of concerns and disagreements, at least in the early stages.

Parents' concerns were due to the age of their daughter at the time of marriage, because they considered her too young (12 women - 25%) and/or because they didn't know the boy very well (16 women - 33.3%) - sometimes they knew their future partner from social networks (1 woman). Running away was the reason for other cases of non-approval and again poverty was mentioned: *'They were not enthusiastic about my relationship with this boy because he was poor, but they got used to the idea when I got pregnant.'* Roma woman, 20 years.

Figure 3 – Family reactions to marriage (%)<sup>38</sup>



Before they married or started living with their partner, 28 (58.3%) of the 'married' Roma women interviewed lived with their parents and took care of the family and home. Only 7 (14.6%) were still at school. 8 (16.7%) were looking for a job and 5 (10.4%) were already working. Only 14.6% (7) were in school and 16.7% (8) were looking for a job. The proportion of working women was 10.4% (5).

A large percentage of these interviewees (39 women - 81.3%) considered that their marriage changed their lives.

There are many reasons for these women considered their marriage as turning point. Mainly they started to feel the pressure to have children (25 women – 52%). They also felt limitation in their own lives: they were no more able to go to work (13 women – 27%) or to school (12 women – 25%). Move for living with the in-laws (9 women – 18,7%) was also mentioned as well as the lost of freedom (9 women – 18,7%). It is also relevant the increase of responsibilities (10 women – 20,8%):

<sup>38</sup> Multiple answers.

*'I've started to have more responsibilities and have a hard time with housework.'* Roma Woman, 18 years.

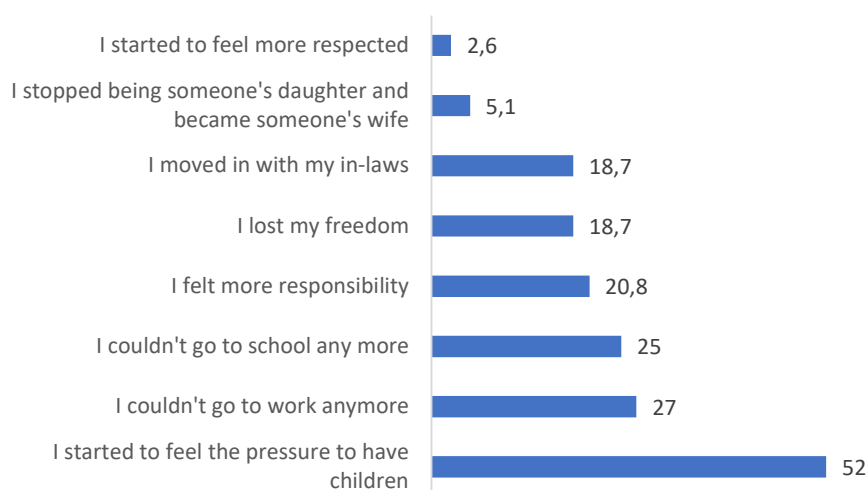
*'I have more responsibilities, I have to take care of my house, family, household, I don't have time for myself.'* Roma Woman, 19 years.

*'I was afraid I couldn't manage as a woman in the house. I wasn't ready to get married.'* Roma Woman, 24 years.

*'I felt the pressure of housework and the worries of a family.'* Roma Woman, 18 years.

*'I never imagined it would be so hard.'* Roma Woman, 18 years.

**Figure 4 – Perceptions of changes in life after marriage (%)<sup>39</sup>**



<sup>39</sup> Multiple answers.

Roma Influencers  
Network

ROMA INFLUENCERS NETWORK/2024-1-EL01-KA220-ADU-000247507



**Κλίμακα**  
Φορέας Ανάπτυξης Ανθρώπινου  
& Κοινωνικού Κεφαλαίου  
για την Αντιμετώπιση  
του Κοινωνικού Αποκλεισμού

**Κέντρο Ημέρας για Ρομά**  
Ομάδα Ν.Α. Ερασιμότητας, Τ.Α. 14413, 28040, Τ.Α. 110340020  
ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ - Αθήνα

**Cairde**  
Challenging ethnic minority health inequalities

**Esis**  
CENTRO DE ESTUDOS  
INTERVENÇÃO  
SOCIAL

**cooper  
activa**

**SASTIPEN**

### III. 4. Motherhood

It is common knowledge among those working with Roma communities that motherhood plays a central and deeply respected role, serving as both a cultural cornerstone and a symbol of identity and continuity. In many Roma cultures, becoming a mother is seen as an important milestone, marking a woman's full participation in community life and reinforcing her status and influence within the family structure. Through motherhood, Roma women play a role not only in raising children, but also in preserving traditions and values across generations.

All women who responded to the project's questionnaire in Romania (already) have children. A total of 31 women (62%) have only one child and the other 38% (19) have between 2 or 3 children. The average number of children is 1,44.<sup>40</sup>

As mentioned above, most of these women married at a very young age and consequently entered motherhood at a very young age. The average age of these women when they had their first child was 16.64. It is important to put these figures into context by saying that in 2023 the average age of women in Romania at the birth of their first child is 27 years, according to Eurostat data for 2022.<sup>41</sup>

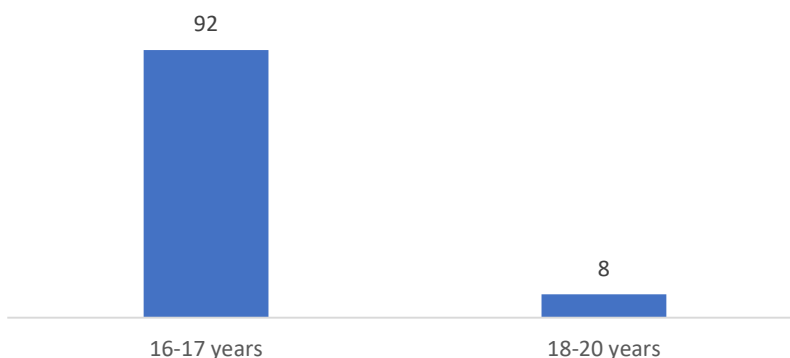
As can be seen in the figure below, more than 90% (46) of the respondents had their first child when they were minors. Only four women gave birth between the ages of 18 and 20.

<sup>40</sup> The fertility rate in Romania is approximately 1.71 children per woman, according to 2022 data from Eurostat. This figure represents a slight decrease from the previous year, 2021, when the rate was 1.81 children per woman. It should be noted that the fertility rate is lower among the female respondents, but the average age of the group is very low.

<sup>41</sup> [UE. Luxemburgo entre os países onde mulheres são mães cada vez mais tarde | Contacto.](#)



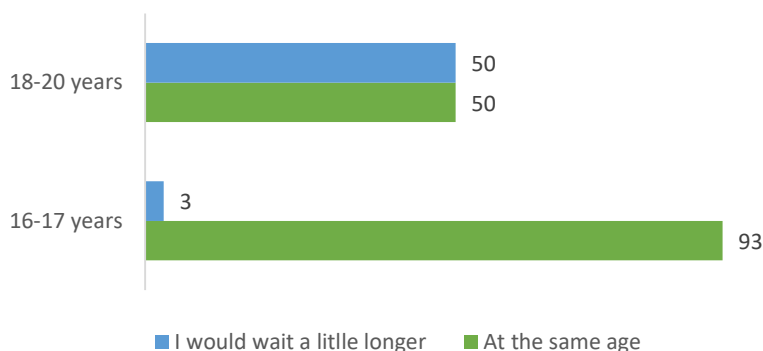
Figure 5 – Age of women at the birth of their first child (%)



According to the responses, most of the pregnancies were unplanned (48 women – 96%). Only 2 respondents had planned their pregnancies.

Whether because they became mothers at a young age or because it wasn't planned, most women (40 which means 80%) would like to wait a little longer before having their first child. This opinion is even more pronounced among those who gave birth at a younger age (between 16 and 17 years).

Figure 6 – Age preference for first-time motherhood by age group of Roma women (%)



For those who would prefer to wait a little longer, the most explicit reason is related to the lack of preparation for motherhood that some women express (26 women - 57.8%).

Some women find this stage of life very demanding. Also, as mentioned above, some women felt pressure to become mothers.

These feeling can be associate to the notion that motherhood is a great responsibility (6 women – 12,5%): *It was overwhelming at first. I didn't know what to expect* (Roma Woman, 25 years old).

For some, motherhood has cut their expectations: 26 (54.2%) stopped going to school; 9 (18.8%) stopped going to university; 4 (8.3%) stopped going to work.

Other women mentioned health problems: 9 (20%) mentioned that the baby was born prematurely and/or underweight (17 women - 37.8%). This is obviously a concern not only for the baby's health, but also for the mother herself.

Figure 7 – Reasons for wanting to have children later in life (%)<sup>42</sup>



<sup>42</sup> Multiple answers.

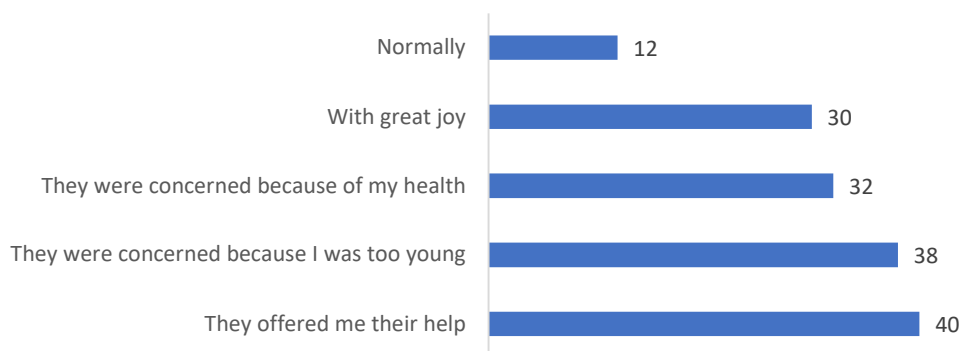
Traditionally in Roma communities, the birth of a child is not just a private family affair, but a communal event that strengthens social bonds. This perspective is reflected in the responses of the 20 women (40%) for whom the family offered to help look after the child. The birth of a child is a great event and the reaction of the families is generally very positive and the child is welcomed with great joy (15 women - 30%), but for all of these women this joy was accompanied by concern on the part of the families and, in some way, by a sense of awareness: concern for their health (16 women – 32%) and a sense of awareness that they were too young to be mothers (19 women – 38%).

Some examples are presented below:

*'My parents were worried about how I would manage.'* Roma Woman, 18 years.

*'They were worried we couldn't manage with the children.'* Roma Woman, 31 years.

Figure 8 – Reaction of the family to the pregnancy (%)<sup>43</sup>



The period following childbirth, known as the postpartum period, is a profound time of change for new mothers—physically, emotionally, and mentally. While it's filled with joy

<sup>43</sup> Multiple answers.

it also comes with challenges. Family support during this time is not just helpful; it's often essential for the well-being of both the mother and the baby.

In this sense, 33 women (66%) of the respondents had help after the birth. When asked who provided the most important help, the majority of respondents said their own mothers (26 women - 78.8%). Their sister also played an important role (11 women - 33.3%). This means that caring for a child is a task that remains mainly in the female domain.

As far as the father's family is concerned, this fact was also mentioned (11 women - 33.3%), particularly due to the fact that after the marriage, the in-laws' house became the couple's house (see previous chapter). The father himself seems to be the person who provides the least help at this stage (3 women - 9.1%), leaving this role to the women in the family.

It is also important to refer that 17 of the interviewees (34%) had any help after the birth of their child.



ROMA INFLUENCERS NETWORK/2024-1-EL01-KA220-ADU-000247507



### III. 5. Became a mother - feelings and changes

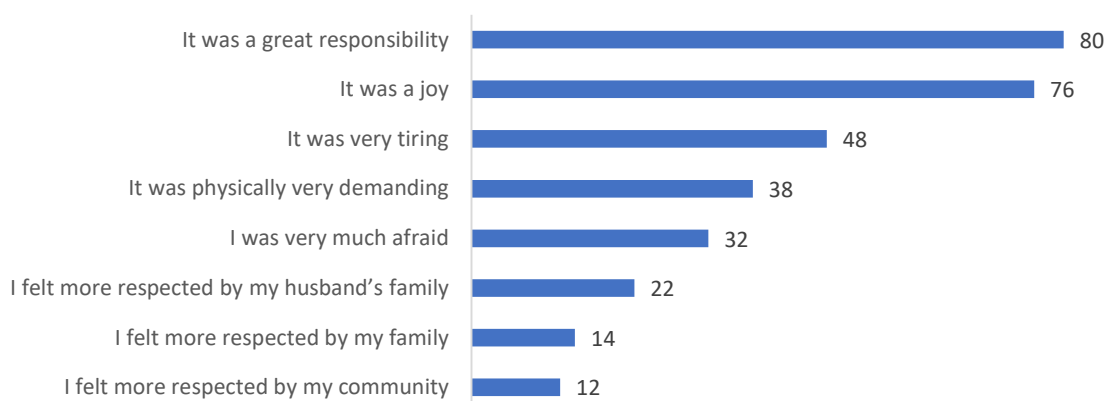
Not only for the families, but also for the women interviewed, motherhood turns out to be a great responsibility (40 women - 80%). This new responsibility also brings joy (38 women mentioned it - 76%) and respect: from their husbands' families (11 women - 22%), from their own families (7 women - 7%) and from their community (6 women - 12%): *'I felt much more loved by my partner and my in-laws.'* Roma Woman, 20 years.

However, motherhood is seen also as very stressful, demanding or exhausting. A total of 24 (48%) of the women's opinions confess their tiredness after becoming a mother and 19 (38%) even mentioned how physically demanding being a mother can be:

*'I had postpartum depression, which made things really difficult.'* Roma Woman, 22 years.

*'It was hard. I didn't have enough support.'* Roma Woman, 22 years.

Figure 9 - What it was like to become a mother (%)<sup>44</sup>



<sup>44</sup> Multiple answers.

But as expected, becoming a mother brings many changes and new routines to the lives of couples, but especially to the lives of mothers. Many adjustments had to be made in the family with the arrival of a baby. 47 of the 50 Roma women interviewed (94%) expressed this view of change when asked about their lives after becoming mothers.

According to the respondents, some of the changes that come with motherhood are particularly impactful for a new mother. A total of 18 (38%) responses from Roma women indicated that they no longer have time for themselves - this is the main impact felt by these women.

The baby became the centre of their lives and their priority – *‘Responsibilities have multiplied; it’s not just about me anymore.’* Roma Woman, 24 years - so some of them had to leave school (17 women - 36%); were unable to work (12 women - 25%); lost their freedom (8 women - 17%). The arrival of the baby also had a negative impact on their relationship with their husbands (16 women - 34%).

The responsibilities and demands of motherhood increase with poverty. We can see this in the words of two women who responded:

*‘I felt a lot of deprivation.’* Roma Woman, 22 years.

*‘I felt how hard it is to be a parent, when you have nothing to clothe and feed your child.’* Roma Woman, 23 years.

However, some also mention loving their child as a 'new' feeling:

*‘It’s amazing but also challenging. Watching my child grow is a blessing.’*  
Roma Woman, 20 years.

*‘Motherhood wasn’t what I expected, but I love my child more than anything.’* Roma Woman, 18 years.



Figure 10 – Changes in life after motherhood (%)<sup>45</sup>



### III. 6. The relevance of information

Becoming a mother doesn't necessarily mean having all the information needed to manage this event in the best possible way, considering the wellbeing of both mother and child.

Of the Roma women surveyed, 39 (78%) said they did not have adequate information about pregnancy.

In terms of information about caring for a child, only 13 women (26%) felt that they had adequate information on this specific issue. Considering that many of the women received help from their families, this could be an asset.

<sup>45</sup> Multiple answers.

It is almost taken for granted that all pregnancies are followed up these days. However, this is not necessarily the case for every woman, even though it can cause serious problems for both the baby and the mother.

In relation to the Roma women interviewed only 25 of them (50%) had attend hospital/medical appointments before giving birth.

The most common reason for not attending these appointments is the fear of paying fees (38 women - 76%) due to some difficulties that were expressed, which were a mixture of financial issues and a poor opinion of hospitals and medical care in general:

*'I didn't have money for transportation or medical tests. I heard stories of other Roma women being ignored or mistreated in hospitals.'* Roma Woman, 20 years.

*'The hospital is very far away from us, and I didn't have the financial resources to get there.'* Roma Woman, 39 years.

There is also shame about seeking medical advice (14 women - 56%), as well as a lack of information about how to go (15 women - 60%) and the fact that they have no one to accompany them (9 women - 36%). These aspects raise serious concerns about the monitoring of pregnancies among Roma women and the consequences that may result from this lack of medical follow-up.

Figure 11 - Reasons for not attending hospital/medical appointments (%)<sup>46</sup>



When antenatal classes were taken into account, only four women responded positively. The majority hadn't prepared for the birth; 25 women (almost 55%) didn't know how to get to these classes and 17 (37%) knew they existed:

*'I didn't know such a thing existed.'* Roma Woman, 20 years.

*'I have never heard of anyone attending such courses.'* Roma Woman, 20 years.

On the other hand, there was also a significant percentage (15 women - 33%) who were not even aware of its importance.

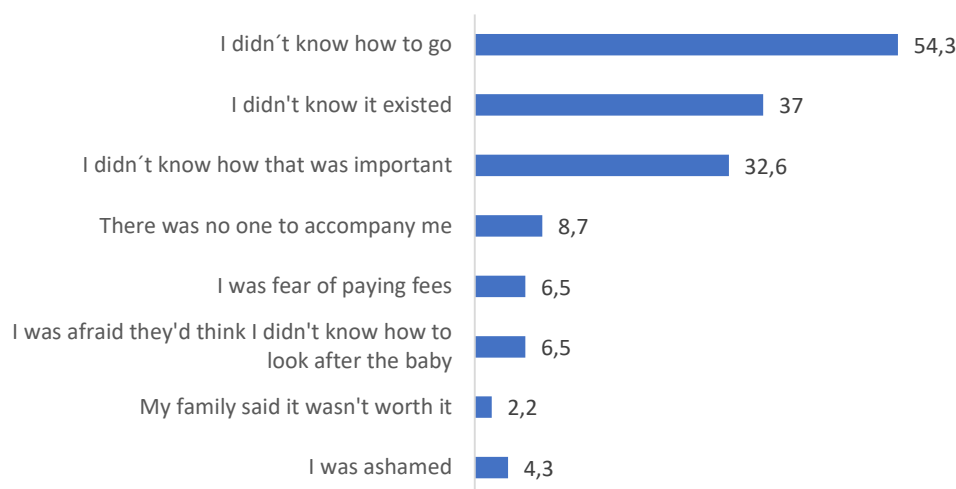
Fewer women expressed how community can shape behaviour:

*'In my community, pregnant women don't usually attend such classes.'* Roma Woman, 22 years.

*'I thought I could learn everything I need from my mother or other women in my family.'* Roma Woman, 27 years.

<sup>46</sup> Multiple answers.

Figure 12 - Reasons for not attending prenatal classes (%)<sup>47</sup>



The number of women who do not know about postnatal depression also shows the lack of information about motherhood: only 16 Roman women have heard about this health problem (32%) and only 6 (37.5%) know someone who has suffered from it.

Only one woman felt that she was suffering and getting help when asked about her own situation.

### III. 7. Preventing early marriage and early motherhood

Given the importance of the issue of early marriage and motherhood and how it can affect the lives of young Roma women, not only physically but also in terms of their choices and futures, respondents' opinions highlight the need for intervention.

<sup>47</sup> Multiple answers.

When asked what activities could be undertaken to achieve this goal, a number of suggestions and opinions were expressed. These could be organised as follows:

*'Be encouraged to have a career before we get married.'* Roma Woman, 21 years.

*'Having girls' programs where we learn new things, travel and discover our passions.'* Roma Woman, 25 years.

*'If there was a doctor to tell us what to do to avoid getting pregnant, many girls would wait.'* Roma Woman, 20 years.

*'Know more about relationships, contraception and reproductive health.'*  
Roma Woman, 18 years.

*'Many girls don't know how not to get pregnant. If someone explained it to us, maybe we wouldn't have children so early.'* Roma Woman, 25 years.

*'The risks girls face when getting married early should be promoted.'* Roma Woman, 19 years.

'We don't talk about this. If someone taught us, we'd know better.' Roma Woman, 20 years.

### - Educating parents

*'I think it would be good for us parents to be trained.'* Roma Woman, 31 years.

### - Using role models

*'I think it would be good if we had more positive role models.'* Roma Woman, 19 years.

### - Proximity advice

*'If we had someone to listen and advise us, we could make better decisions.'*  
Roma Woman, 22 years.

In any case, some women find it difficult to make suggestions because change is also difficult in a community where behaviour is shaped by the majority and were doing things differently can be perceived negatively.

*'All our girls get married early, so we don't even think that there is another way.'* Roma Woman, 18 years.

*'If you get lucky and your family lets you, fine, but if not, what can you do?'*  
Roma Woman, 39 years.

*'In our community, girls who marry late are spoken ill of. If people thought differently, it would be easier.'* Roma Woman, 24 years.



Council of Europe (2011)

**5. Discussion (4.1) (100%)**

F. Rompiu (n.d.). Proiecte

European Commission (2002)

European Union Agency for

minorities and discrimina

Eurostat (2022). Fertility.

Eurostat on teenage birth

<https://ec.europa.eu/euro>

- <https://www.girlsnotbr>

Human Rights Watch. (2016). Our time to sing and play: Child marriage in Nepal.

<https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/09/08/our-time-sing-and-play/child-marriage-nepal>

Jain, S., & Kurz, K. (2007). New insights on preventing child marriage: A global analysis of factors and programs. International Center for Research on Women.

MĂLINA VOICU RALUCA POPESCU. Quality of Life Magazine. BIRTH AND MARRIAGE AMONG THE ROMA POPULATION Jurnalul Olteniei. (2019). Stolen childhood: Roma saying no to early marriage. Available at: <https://www.jurnalulolteniei.ro>

Malhotra, A., Warner, A., McGonagle, A., & Lee-Rife, S. (2011). Solutions to end child marriage: What the evidence shows. International Center for Research on Women.

Ministry of Education (2016) School after School Program. Retrieved from <https://www.edu.ro/scoala-dupa-scoala>

Ministry of Family, Youth, and Equal Opportunities.(2023).NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUARANTEE FOR CHILDREN (NAP)[https://copii.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Plan-national-Garantie\\_aprobat\\_site.pdf](https://copii.gov.ro/1/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Plan-national-Garantie_aprobat_site.pdf)

Ministry of Health (2021). Health Mediators Program. Retrieved from <https://ms.ro>

Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity (2022). National Strategy on Promoting Equality de Șanse între Femei și Bărbați și Prevenirea și Combaterea

Ministry of National Education (2021). National Strategy to Reduce Dropout. Available at: <https://edu.ro>

National Statistical Institute. (2023). Demographic events in 2023. Bucharest, Romania: INS. <https://insse.ro/cms/>

National Statistical Institute. (2023). Demographic events in the year 2023. Bucharest, Romania:INS. <https://insse.ro/cms/>

ROMA INFLUENCERS NETWORK/2024-1-EL01-KA220-ADU-000247507



(2022). Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity.

News for Life. (2018) Early marriages in Roma communities: Causes and effects. Available at:

<https://stiripentruviata.ro>

Organizatia Natiunilor Unite. (1989). Conventia privind drepturile copilului.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

Romanian Government Strategy for the Inclusion of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority for the Period 2022-2027. (2022).

Romanian Government. (2021). National Strategy for the Integration of Romanian Citizens Belonging to the Roma Minority 2021-2027. Retrieved from <https://pnccr.fonduri-ue.ro>

Romanian Parliament (2014). 272 of June 21, 2004(\*\*republished\*\*) on the protection and promotion of children's rights <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/156097>

Romanian Parliament. (2003) Law 217/2003 on preventing and combating domestic violence. Monitorul Oficial. <https://legislatie.iust.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/44014>

Romanian Parliament. (2004) Law no. 272/2004 on the protection and promotion of children's rights. Monitorul Oficial. <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/52909>

Save the Children. (2023). Study on underage mothers: statistics and solutions.  
<https://www.salvaticopiii.ro/sites/ro/files/2023-11/studiu-mame-minore-statistici-si-solutii.pdf>

Save the Children. (2024) Study on underage mothers and underage pregnant women - Research Report. <https://www.salvaticopiii.ro/sites/ro/files/2024-04/studiu-privind-mamele-minore.pdf>

UNFPA. (2013). Motherhood in childhood: Facing the challenge of adolescent pregnancy. <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/state-world-population-2013>

UNICEF. (2023). Child marriage: Latest trends and future prospects. <https://www.unicef.org/protection/child-marriage>

United Nations (2014) Resolution on child, early and forced marriage. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2018-0187\\_RO.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2018-0187_RO.html)

United Nations (2014). resolution on forced marriages. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2018-0187\\_RO.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-8-2018-0187_RO.html)

World Health Organization (WHO) (2022) Global Report on Maternal and Child Health. Available at: <https://www.who.int>

Roma Influencers  
Network

ROMA INFLUENCERS NETWORK/2024-1-EL01-KA220-ADU-000247507



**Κλίμακα**  
Φορέας Ανάπτυξης Ανθρώπινου  
& Κοινωνικού Κεφαλαίου  
για την Αντιμετώπιση  
του Κοινωνικού Αποκλεισμού



**Cairde**  
Challenging ethnic minority health inequalities

**Esis**  
CENTRO DE ESTUDOS  
INTERVENÇÃO  
SOCIAL

**cooper  
activa**

**SASTIPEN**