



**EQUINET**  
European Network  
of Equality Bodies

# **The role of national equality bodies on Roma (health) equality**

**Combatting inequalities in healthcare: a first step towards health equity for Roma**  
EPHA, 8 April 2021



Cofunded by the Rights, Equality and  
Citizenship Programme of the European Union

[www.equineteurope.org](http://www.equineteurope.org)

# Equinet Mission

Equinet promotes equality in Europe by supporting equality bodies to be independent and effective catalysts for more equal societies.



Cofunded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union

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# Equinet Members

- Network of national **equality bodies** (47 members from across Europe)
- Equality bodies set up on the basis of **EU Equal Treatment Directives** (2000/43/EC; 2004/113/EC; 2006/54/EC)
- **Diversity** among national equality bodies in terms of size, mandate, grounds, structure and experience



# The work of equality bodies

## Hard and soft powers

### Functions laid down in EU Directives:

- Independent assistance to victims of discrimination
- Independent surveys and reports concerning discrimination
- Recommendations to policy makers on discrimination issues
- Exchange of information with European bodies

### Wider functions accorded to Equality Bodies:

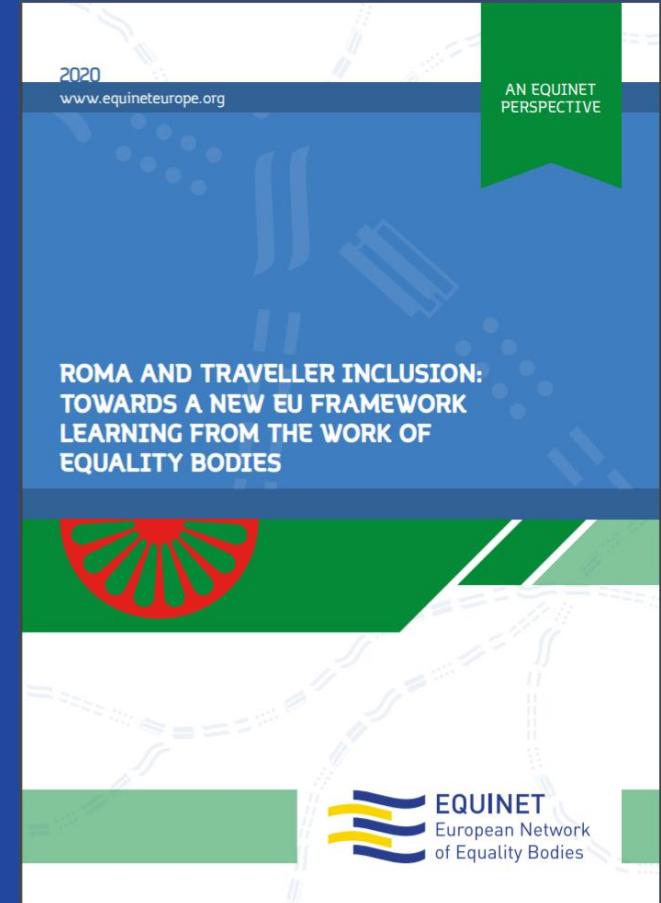
- Communication, awareness-raising and promotion of values
- Promotion of good practices
- Work with stakeholders
- Monitoring and supervision



# Roma and Traveller inclusion: towards a new EU framework learning from the work of equality bodies

- ❖ Perspective prepared by Equinet's Working Group on Policy Formation
- ❖ Based on a survey completed by 20 equality bodies in 20 jurisdictions
- ❖ Published in summer 2020

+ upcoming perspective and seminar on  
*'Equality, Diversity, and Non-Discrimination in Healthcare'*



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# Key findings from Equinet's perspectives – areas of concern in healthcare

Particular focus by NEBs on Roma (alongside other groups)...

- ❖ Lack of health insurance (and documents)
- ❖ Uneven geographical spread of health services
- ❖ Discrimination when accessing health services
- ❖ Segregation of Roma women in maternity services
- ❖ Forced sterilisation



# Key findings from Equinet's perspective – other areas of concern

- ❖ The other 3 areas from the previous EU Framework
- ❖ Under-reporting
- ❖ Systemic, institutional and structural discrimination
- ❖ Intersectionality, e.g. Roma women
- ❖ Poverty, socio-economic disadvantages
- ❖ Issues around policing (ethnic profiling, police violence)
- ❖ Public discourse (hate speech, hostility, stereotyping)
- ❖ Barriers to free circulation of migrant Roma
- ❖ Invisibility if Roma constitute a small proportion of the population
- ❖ Respect for Roma and Traveller culture and identity (info material in Romani, recognition of Roma history and culture)



# Key findings from the Roma perspective – Covid-19

- ❖ **Covid-19** as a specific and difficult context, increasing the vulnerability of Roma communities:
  - ❖ Typically poor health status, underlying conditions
  - ❖ Overcrowded and poor living conditions, difficulty to follow strict hygiene protocols
  - ❖ Public health measures and warnings not reaching Roma
  - ❖ Existing socio-economic disadvantages exacerbated by economic crisis (e.g. unemployment, informal economy) and lockdown (e.g. access to education)



# Relevant examples from Equinet's Covid-19 database

- ❖ Roma settlements with substandard living conditions, no access to drinking water and disinfectants, resulting in higher health risks
- ❖ Statement on including Roma people in decision-making
- ❖ Enforcement by police of emergency powers disproportionately affecting Travellers and Roma (including mistreatment and violence)
- ❖ Putting whole Roma settlement into quarantaine due to only one person breaking quarantaine regulations
- ❖ Public statements stereotyping marginalized Roma communities, including suggestion to restrict access to healthcare to certain groups
- ❖ Denial of access to services, including pharmacies



# Entry points for policy

- ❖ **EU Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion and participation:**
  - ❖ 'Cut life expectancy gap by at least half, to ensure that by 2030 Roma women and men live 5 years longer'
- ❖ **Council Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation** (Member States should ensure effective equal access without barriers to quality healthcare and social services)
- ❖ **UN Sustainable Development Goals**
- ❖ **European Pillar of Social Rights** (principle 16: health care)



# Together towards Roma Equality: Implementing the EU Roma Strategic Framework - key conclusions

(Equinet roundtable, 22 February 2021)

- ❖ Appalling situation on the ground
- ❖ Need for strong and effective, enforceable rules
- ❖ Create links between policy and financial tools, be strategic
- ❖ Solid monitoring and measurement is crucial
- ❖ Role for equality bodies in design, implementation and monitoring of national strategies
- ❖ Equality bodies have a potential for: monitoring (incl. case work and research), recommendations; communication, trainings & awareness-raising; supporting Roma participation
- ❖ The necessity of working in partnership



# Where next?

- ❖ Realise and implement equality as a founding value of the EU
- ❖ A question of political will?
- ❖ Implement the EU framework and strong national frameworks
- ❖ Take a holistic approach: equality, inclusion, participation and the 4 sectoral objectives are all linked, no real progress until progress on all
- ❖ Use financial means wisely, including EU funds
- ❖ Work in partnerships – including civil society and equality bodies, strengthening both



# THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

## ANY QUESTIONS ?

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