



FINDING SUSTAINABLE FUNDING TO BUILD HEALTH EQUITY IN EUROPE

A PRACTICAL GUIDE

September 2021

About EPHA

EPHA is a change agent – Europe's leading NGO alliance advocating for better health. We are a dynamic member-led organisation, made up of public health civil society, patient groups, health professionals, and disease groups working together to improve health and strengthen the voice of public health in Europe.



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Background

This guide has been created following a workshop organised by the European Public Health Alliance to strengthen capacities of national and local stakeholders working with vulnerable groups to gather new income streams, within a post-COVID context. It provides practical information about European programmes and funds available for non-governmental organisations; regional and local authorities; local and grassroots associations who want to address widening inequalities across Europe, particularly national and local Roma and pro-Roma civil society organisations but also NGOs working with vulnerable groups such as homeless people, migrants and refugees, people with disabilities, LGBTQI+ in EU Member States and Candidate countries.

More broadly, it provides support to civil society, public health communities, universities and research institutes willing to establish cross-sectoral and transnational cooperation to mitigate the pandemic effects on the most vulnerable and build health equity in Europe.

The capacity-building workshop “Finding sustainable fundraising to tackle health inequalities¹” on which this guide is based involved representatives of the European Commission, EEA/Norway Grants, Council of Europe, civil society and academia. The workshop (available online²) offered a space to reflect on the barriers in accessing EU funds, the limitations of EU projects as well as some solutions to overcome such challenges. In addition, it advanced a discussion about the role of European institutions and international organisations in reducing health and social inequalities through current and future programmes, projects and strategic partnership. Hence, this guide includes inputs from national organisations, local authorities and universities involved in European and transnational projects who shared experience and knowledge about programme management in specific fields such as vaccine equity, reproductive health, community mobilising, and policy development in partnership with vulnerable groups.

1 <https://epha.org/finding-sustainable-funding-to-build-health-equity-in-europe/>

2 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcFu43cHqt8&feature=youtu.be&ab_channel=EuropeanPublicHealthAllianceEPA

Why do we need this guide?

European programmes and related funds provide essential support to civil society organisations in implementing actions with a focus on vulnerable groups, whilst reinforcing European values and basic principles such as equality and non-discrimination. In parallel, accessing funds and programmes provided by European institutions and international organisations can be challenging for organisations active at both national and local levels. Low capacity to apply and manage European projects as well as ensuring project's co-funding and sufficient human resources remain a significant obstacle for many organisations working with the most vulnerable. Moreover, administrative barriers can dissuade national and local organisations from applying for European funding and de facto prevent them from committing to the implementation of European programmes. There is a need for timely and quality training and capacity building opportunities, especially in the context of ensuring Europe's recovery and resilience, which also raises many issues related to health and social inequalities.

This guide aims to provide additional support for national and local actors such as civil society, universities, research institutes or local authorities to secure the sustainability of their projects and initiatives and aid their fundraising efforts. It provides practical information about current programmes and income streams offered by various stakeholders such as the European Commission, the Council of Europe, EEA/Norway grants seeking to tackle the social determinants of poor health.

More precisely this guide aims to:

- Increase understanding about different transnational programmes and funds promoting synergies and transnational cooperation
- Strengthen capacities of civil society to build strong coalitions involving strategic stakeholders such as EU and national NGOs, researchers, academics and advocates
- Share knowledge and mutual learning regarding EU project management and transnational partnership
- Highlight the role of the European Union in promoting successful models and initiatives at national and local levels through EU programmes and funds
- Increase understanding about the role of major international organisations such as the Council of Europe in building partnerships to support the most vulnerable
- Provide space for policy dialogue and mutual learning to address barriers in accessing EU and national funds

- Support the promotion of good practices and successful initiatives implemented by civil society and governmental actors to advance health equity and social justice
- Improve national and local organisations' access to funds available at international and European level
- Provide support to civil society organisations to diversify their income streams
- Enhance the role of grassroots associations in the implementation of transnational and cross-sectoral projects
- Raise awareness about the barriers and consequences of the lower access to funds that national and local organisations working with vulnerable groups face
- Increase the involvement of Roma and pro-Roma organisations and public health communities in transnational civil society coalitions
- Build capacities of civil society organisations to implement projects combining different income streams (co-funding)

From the perspectives of national and local organisations, this guide offers an opportunity to reflect on the factors and benefits for/of building strategic transnational and cross-sectoral partnership. Specific attention is paid on the role of grassroots organisations which in general have lower access to EU funds and programmes.

Relevant programmes

The COVID-19 pandemic increased levels of health and social inequalities across Europe bringing additional challenges for civil society, especially for organisations working with the most vulnerable, such as Roma. European and national organisations must adapt their strategies and find new income streams to ensure the continuity of their activities and safeguard that the most vulnerable enjoy adequate protection. The following programmes are specifically aimed at tackling health inequalities with a focus on specific vulnerable groups – for more information on EU programmes to fund health projects, please see the EPHA briefing *Harnessing EU Funds for Public Health*.¹

1. Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV)

After long negotiations, the 2021-2027 EU budget was adopted and endorsed by EU national governments in December 2020, allocating 1.5 billion to Rights and Values as a thematic priority. As a result, the CERV programme was created, merging two previous programmes: the

¹ <https://epha.org/harnessing-eu-funds-for-public-health/>

Rights, Equality and Citizenship programme and the Europe for Citizens programme.

The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme 2021-2027² aims to strengthen the promotion and protection of fundamental rights as essential European values by providing support to organisations acting at European, national and local levels. This programme greatly contributes to advancing equal opportunities which in turn positively impacts multiple social determinants of health, such as access to education, employment or housing.

The CERV programme makes it possible to focus on specific population groups and socio-economic categories which experience inequalities in accessing essential rights and services, leading to poor mental and physical health. It commits to promoting equitable and healthier societies founded on the rule of law; reaffirming democratic principles on which the EU was founded, and values such as “pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail” enshrined by article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union.

CERV is also based on the following articles of the EU founding treaty: Article 168 (public health); Article 167 (promoting EU Member States culture); Article 24 (provision of the European Citizens’ Initiative); Article 19 (support actions taken by Member States to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation); Article 21 (citizens’ rights to move and reside freely); and Article 16(2) (data protection). The programme is also linked to the EU Strategy for Combatting Anti-Semitism, the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025, as well as the EU Roma Strategic Framework on Equality, Inclusion and Participation. Therefore, it supports projects aiming to tackle discrimination and racism, protect vulnerable children, people with disabilities, those experiencing gender-based violence: topics which are highly pertinent for reducing health inequalities and addressing their disproportionate effects on vulnerable groups.

Application process

The entire application process is digitalised and application forms are submitted only through the **Funding & Tenders** Electronic Submission System created by the European Commission. The submission of the project proposal requires a registration via the electronic system which generates 9-digit participant identification code (PIC). This code is essential for finalising the submission of the project proposals. In addition, the applicant is required to complete three documents, including

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programmeme-performance/citizens-equality-rights-and-values-programme-performance_en

administrative details about the organisations applying for the specific grant (future coordinator, beneficiaries, affiliated entities and associated partners) and must include a summarised budget covering the activities in the project proposal. The second document requires a detailed description of the projects' actions and covers the technical content of the proposal. The third part of the application covers eventual annexes which must be uploaded as PDF files, except the budget table (MS Excel file).

An online manual³ providing guidance has been created by the European Commission to facilitate the application process.

The European Commission issues regular calls on different aspects of this programme which can be found on their Funding and Tender Opportunities Portal.⁴ This portal provides a platform for organisations to search for partners with whom they can submit joint proposals.⁵

Responsible bodies

The CERV programme is coordinated by DG Justice, Directorate Programme and Financial management, Unit Programmes



■ Programmes (JUST.04.003)

European Union > European Commission > Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers > Programme and Financial management > Programmes (JUST.04.003)

Relevant contacts can be found on the “Who is who” portal created by the European Commission⁶.

Additional information can be found here:

- 1) The 2021-2027 EU budget – What’s new?⁷
- 2) Regulation (EU) 2021/1057 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and repealing Regulation (EU) No 1296/2013.⁸

³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/common/guidance/om_en.pdf

⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/cerv>

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/partner-search>

⁶ https://op.europa.eu/en/web/who-is-who/organization/-/organization/JUST/COM_CRF_240883

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/2021-2027/whats-new_en

⁸ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32021R1057>

2. How does EU support vulnerable groups, including Roma in the candidate countries, and in the Western Balkans in particular?

The current candidate countries are Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey.

The main financial mechanism aiming to support reforms in candidate countries is the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance. Between 2007 and 2020 more than 24 billion EUR was allocated to this instrument: EUR 11.5 billion for IPA (2007-2013) and 12.8 billion for 2014-2020 (IPA II). The IPA III is part of the EU's budget covering the period of 2021-2027 and is expected to be adopted in September 2021. The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance for the next programming period comprises EUR 14.162 billion which will be aligned with the priorities of the 'Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans'⁹ adopted in October 2020 to support economic recovery of the region; the green and digital transition; competitiveness and inclusive growth. Also, it incorporates the priorities of the Western Balkan Strategy¹⁰ adopted in February 2018, and the European Commission's Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions issued on 5 February 2020.¹¹

2.1 Roma inclusion in the Western Balkans

In July 2019 political leaders of Western Balkans countries adopted a declaration¹² on Roma inclusion to advance the socio-economic participation and reduce inequalities between Roma and the general population. This political commitment includes concrete measures for improving Roma's access to basic rights and services, in particular in health, education, housing, employment and to tackle discrimination. However, a report¹³ published by the World Bank emphasising the demographic, social and economic aspects of Roma inclusion, demonstrates the difficulties in establishing evidence-based policies due to the lack of reliable data in the relevant fields. The report highlights the lower progress achieved in the five strategic areas and the need for effective measures to advance the socio-economic participation of Roma, which results in significant human and financial losses, and which requires sustained commitment from policy makers at all levels. According to the World Bank report, Roma inclusion can generate significant financial and fiscal gains, estimated to be from €314 million to €1.28 billion per year. Therefore, European funds allocated to Western Balkans countries are of

⁹ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1811

¹⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/communication-credible-enlargement-perspective-western-balkans_en.pdf

¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/enlargement-methodology_en.pdf

¹² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_3669

¹³ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/642861552321695392/pdf/Breaking-the-Cycle-of-Roma-Exclusion-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>

utmost importance in promoting national reforms and the development of policies to address 1) Roma exclusion in its multiple dimensions and 2) design accurate programmes addressing social, economic, environmental determinants of health as a whole.

Calls for projects are expected to be published the last quarter of 2021 after the adoption of the IPA III. They will be available on the European Commission [Funding and Tenders](#) opportunities online platform.

2.2 Contact details

General (programme management)¹⁴



■ Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes (NEAR.D.5)

[European Union](#) > [European Commission](#) > [Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations](#) > [Western Balkans](#) > Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes (NEAR.D.5)
Head of Unit: [Mr Holger SCHROEDER](#)

Social inclusion¹⁵



■ Civil Society and Social Inclusion (NEAR.D.5.002)

[European Union](#) > [European Commission](#) > [Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations](#) > [Western Balkans](#) > [Western Balkans Regional Cooperation and Programmes](#) > Civil Society and Social Inclusion (NEAR.D.5.002)
Head of sector: [Ms Liselotte ISAKSSON](#)

Roma inclusion¹⁶



■ Adviser for Coordination of Roma policy (NEAR.DGA1.ADV01)

[European Union](#) > [European Commission](#) > [Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations](#) > [Deputy Director-General in charge of Eastern Neighbourhood, Economic Transformation and Relations with IFIs](#) > Adviser for Coordination of Roma policy (NEAR.DGA1.ADV01)

3. The EEA and Norway grants

These grants are funded by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway and aim to advance fair societies and economics through cooperation between the funder countries and the fifteen beneficiary countries located in Eastern, Southern Europe and the Baltic region. Funding is managed by the Financial Mechanism which provides support in the form of programmes and grants. It is launched following an agreement with the EU and the countries' beneficiaries and aims to tackle the social and economic divide

¹⁴ https://op.europa.eu/en/web/who-is-who/organization/-/organization/NEAR/COM_CRF_77388

¹⁵ https://op.europa.eu/en/web/who-is-who/organization/-/organization/NEAR/COM_CRF_241784

¹⁶ https://op.europa.eu/en/web/who-is-who/organization/-/organization/NEAR/COM_CRF_244021

across Europe. The current Financial Mechanism comprises two umbrella programmes according to the donor countries and beneficiaries:

- The EEA Grants funded by all three donor countries are available for the following 15 European countries – Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.
- The Norway Grants are funded by Norway and represent €1.3 billion for the current programming period. They are available to all countries mentioned above except Greece and Portugal and are managed by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The EEA and Norway grants address five priorities:

- Innovation, Research, Education and Competitiveness
- Environment, Energy, Climate Change and Low Carbon Economy
- Culture, Civil Society, Good Governance and Fundamental Rights and Freedoms
- Justice and Home Affairs
- Social Inclusion, Youth Employment and Poverty Reduction

The last thematic priority in the list above is particularly relevant for advancing health equity with a focus on vulnerable groups. It funds actions seeking to tackle public health challenges, promote Roma inclusion and empowerment, strengthen the protection of vulnerable children and youth, and boost young people's socio-economic participation. In addition, it supports local development and poverty reduction.

The EEA and Norway grants administration have created an online manual¹⁷ providing detailed information about the functioning of the programmes and grants, thematic priorities and application process. Currently available grants and information about the application process is available at the EEA/Norway Grants funding portal.¹⁸

4. ROMACT programme

ROMACT is a joint initiative of the European Commission and the Council of Europe launched in 2013. Between 2013 and 2017 it was implemented in Eastern and Central European Countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy and in the Slovak Republic, Bulgaria and Romania) as well as Italy. Since 2017 it covers only Bulgaria and Romania - however it involves 141 municipalities located in these countries.

The ROMACT programme offers support to local authorities to establish partnerships and structured dialogue with Roma communities to design policies and public services that meet the needs of everyone. It aims to improve the responsiveness and accountability of local authorities towards

¹⁷ <https://eeagrants.org/resources/eea-and-norway-grants-2014-2021-blue-book-overview-supported-programme-areas>

¹⁸ <https://eeagrants.org/currently-available-funding>

marginalised Roma communities and therefore, focuses on generating long-term sustained political commitment to facilitate the inclusion of Roma population. The ROMACT programme allocates approximatively 25 000 euro per municipality per year to build capacities of local authorities. Municipalities can receive support under the ROMACT programme for the duration of 18-22 months during which they apply the methodology developed by the Council of Europe, participate in training and capacity building events aiming to establish strong partnerships with vulnerable groups such as Roma to develop effective policy responses to issues related to urbanism, access to decent housing, improving infrastructure, access to water etc. These activities constitute an investment in local authorities, which in turn generates financial benefits for the municipalities involved in the programme, through the projects they are implementing.

The ROMACT programme is composed of a central team (Roma and Travellers Team)¹⁹ at the Council of Europe, which is part of the Anti-discrimination Department at DG Democracy²⁰ and national support teams located in the beneficiary countries. The central team is responsible for the overall management of the programme and provides support to national coordinators and experts involved in the national teams. It oversees monitoring, administrative and financial management of the ROMACT programme, whilst National teams composed of a national project officer, a national focal point and several facilitators ensure the day-to-day implementation of the programme at local level.

Additional resources such as guides and manuals for mayors, handbooks and guidelines produced within the ROMACT programme are available on the Council of Europe [website](#). Local authorities can apply to participate in the ROMACT programme by contacting the ROMACT Team at **romact@coe.int** who will provide them with the administrative details and information about the application and selection process. The EEA and Norway grants administration have created an online manual²¹ providing detailed information about the functioning of the programmes and grants, thematic priorities and application process. Currently available grants and information about the application process is available at the EEA/Norway Grants funding portal.²²

19 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers>

20 <https://www.coe.int/en/web/democracy/by-topics>

21 <https://eeagrants.org/resources/eea-and-norway-grants-2014-2021-blue-book-overview-supported-programme-areas>

22 <https://eeagrants.org/currently-available-funding>



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