

ROMA HEALTH AND HOUSING: FILLING IN THE GAPS

A Policy Paper by the Roma Health Network

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Full version available at: <https://epha.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/roma-housing-and-health--rhn2022.pdf>

About us

The [Roma Health Network](#) (RHN) is a network of researchers, advocates and NGO representatives who work on the topic of Roma health. It approaches health from the perspective of the social determinants of health and human rights. Through research, advocacy, policy analysis, monitoring and community cooperation, the RHN works towards capacity building of Roma and pro-Roma civil society. In doing so, it tries to encourage European and national policymakers to support Roma in making use of their right to healthcare, with the end goal of Roma health equity.

Roma Inclusion, Health and Housing

As part of its EU Roma Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation, the European Commission provides the member states with recommendations to their National Roma Strategic Frameworks (NRSFs). The frameworks are the main national tools to achieve Roma inclusion and focus mainly on education, employment, health and housing. Within this context, the RHN focuses on health, as well as housing because of the large influence of living conditions on health.

To name some examples, FRA research shows that Roma generally have a lower life expectancy from birth, as well as lower health insurance coverage than non-Roma. At the same time, they have lower access to running water and sanitation in comparison to non-Roma. Aware of such differences, the RHN researches health inequalities extensively. This has also allowed for identifying blind spots in the existing Roma inclusion strategies.

Gaps in the National Roma Strategic Frameworks

The main gaps the RHN reported are:

- 1) **A lack of use of indicators, clear objectives, timeframes and monitoring**
- 2) **Lack of a community-based and civil society advocacy approach and insufficient health and housing mediation**
- 3) **Insufficient attention to mental health and the psychosocial model**
- 4) **An incomplete approach to Roma housing**
- 5) **Insufficient attention to environmental determinants of health**
- 6) **Not accounting enough for the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and not planning for an inclusive recovery**

Recommendations

Based on its findings, the Roma Health Network recommends that all National Roma Strategic Frameworks should:

- ① Commit to **health** and **housing indicators** based on recommendation [2021/C 93/01](#), the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights' (FRA's) [indicator portfolio](#) and the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) used by [Eurostat](#)
 - through clear and ambitious **action plans** with a **timeframe** and structured **monitoring efforts**
 - including **disaggregated data collection** so that national health and housing inequalities as they relate to Roma can be identified and acted on
- ② Set up a **health advocacy scheme** from a **community-based approach**, encouraging Roma to **participate** in society and to **advocate** for their own rights, together with Roma civil society
 - encourage **health mediation** at the national level
 - focus on **structural funding** both in **capacity building** and **mediation**
 - bridge the gap between Roma and health professionals in a **non-paternalistic** way
- ③ Include a **psychosocial approach to mental health**
 - take a **human rights-based approach** to health, not only to reduce mental distress, but also to improve overall (mental) health among Roma
 - include these approaches through existing **health action plans** and measured with **indicators**
- ④ Expand **housing strategies** significantly to prevent **housing inequalities**
 - monitor housing through a **health impact assessment** to provide a base of evidence for the health effects of housing projects
 - include the limiting effect of **antigypsyism** on Roma housing measures explicitly in **anti-discrimination efforts**
- ⑤ Start incorporating Roma **environmental justice**
 - address issues such as **toxic environments**, housing inequalities, **access to basic services**, **urban environment** and **transport**, and **work-related** and **injury-related inequalities**
- ⑥ Take lessons from the effects of **COVID-19** and how they laid bare **inequalities** between Roma and non-Roma
 - apply these lessons in the NRSFs to ensure an **inclusive recovery** from the pandemic
 - ensure that health and housing **systems** are **equipped** to support Roma in future (health) crises

For more detailed information, read the full policy paper [\[here\]](#). This goes into the identified gaps in the strategies more in-depth. It also explains in more detail how the conclusions were reached that informed the recommendations.

Contact Information

For questions regarding EPHA's Roma Health Network and Roma health advocacy, please contact:

Tomas de Jong, Junior Policy Manager for Health Inequalities: tomas.dejong@epha.org

Information on the Roma Health Network available at: epha.org/roma-health-network