

## Joint pro-Roma Civil Society Contribution to the public consultation on access to health services in the EU

### EXPERT PANEL ON EFFECTIVE WAYS OF INVESTING IN HEALTH (EXPH)

November 2015

#### PART 2 - Roma health mediators (RHMs)

In the past decade a significant amount of knowledge has been gathered on **the operation of Roma intermediaries - the intercultural mediators** - working in various fields (especially in the **key-fields of Roma integration: education, health care, employment, housing**). New information about the intercourse **between social groups and different cultures** and the way that conflict can be best managed with the groups has also proved helpful.

**Roma Health mediators** are **experts of equal opportunity**, who in the course of mediation between Roma communities and various institutions facilitate the availability of public services to the Roma – in particular **education, housing, health care, social service and employment**, by creating **interaction** between and providing **information** for the parties and **by treating conflicts effectively** on the basis of involving active participation of affected parties. Practice indicates that intercultural mediators have a prominent role in aiding **more effective communication** and in **facilitating availability and accessibility of public services for minority groups**.<sup>1</sup>

#### International commitments on Roma health mediators

According to the **ROMED** – the joint Council of Europe - EU programme for Roma mediators, there are **several differences among particular countries** concerning the needs and circumstances of the Roma communities, the terminology in use and also how much the work of intercultural mediators is exploited, and what qualification people who are trained to fulfil these tasks originally had.<sup>2</sup>

**The Council of Europe High Level Meeting on Roma** of 20 October 2010 adopted the '**The Strasbourg Declaration on Roma**' that "agrees to set up a **European Training Programme for Roma Mediators** with the aim to streamline, codify and consolidate the existing training programmes for and about **mediators for Roma**, through the most effective use of existing Council of Europe resources, standards, methodology, networks and infrastructure, notably **the European Youth Centres** in Strasbourg and Budapest, in close co-operation with national and local authorities".<sup>3</sup>

**The European Commission** assessed the national Roma strategies and published its conclusions in which it underlined that several Member States have already put in place or are considering programmes **involving qualified Roma as mediators** for improving access

<sup>1</sup> Éva Deák, Director of the Partners Hungary Foundation: Intercultural Mediator – the birth of a new profession? The forms and role of the intercultural mediator function in the social integration of Romas over the past few years, <http://www.eph.org/a/5882>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.coe-romed.org/>

<sup>3</sup> Council of Europe High Level Meeting on Roma Strasbourg, 20 October 2010 'The Strasbourg Declaration on Roma', <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1691607>

to healthcare. Such measures **need to be supplemented by other actions** to have a significant impact on the **health gap between Roma and the rest of the population.**<sup>4</sup>

### Roma mediators in Europe

Roma Mediators also played a key role in the programme entitled '**A Good Start**' (2010-2012<sup>5</sup>), carried out by the Roma Education Fund in **Macedonia, Hungary, Slovakia** and **Romania** with the support of the Regional Directorate of the European Commission.

The Roma Centre for Health Politics – SASTIPEN, in partnership with the National Institute of Public Health – Romania has been implemented between 2007 – 2013 the project "**Health Mediation Program: Opportunity for increasing the employment rate amongst roman women**" with financial support of **European Social Fund** by Sectorial Operational Program for Developing Human Resources 2007 – 2013 in order to **raise the employment rate among Roma women** and **facilitating their access to the labour market, so as to avoid social exclusion** and to **create a society based on the principle of equal opportunities.**<sup>6</sup>

In **Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia, Serbia, Slovakia, Hungary** and **Ukraine**<sup>7</sup> a system of **Roma health mediators** has been introduced, where the mediators have been working in and for the Roma communities, acting as facilitators between Roma people and health professionals. However, **the level of recognition of the training of Roma Health Mediators** as **an official professional qualification** and support of national authorities varies in Member States.

<sup>4</sup> National Roma Integration Strategies: a first step in the implementation of the EU Framework, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2012:0226:FIN:EN:PDF>

<sup>5</sup> A Good Start, [http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/documents/a\\_good\\_start\\_booklet.2001.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/documents/a_good_start_booklet.2001.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> See more at <http://www.epha.org/spip.php?article5550> and at <http://www.sastipen.ro/proiecte-fse/mediere-sanitara-pms-proiecte>

<sup>7</sup> Roma Health Mediators - Successes and challenges, p 1,

<http://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/press/events/Documents/Roma-Health-Mediators-report-Alina-Covaci.pdf>