

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 3 – National context - case studies from local NGOs from Member States

Slovakia

Healthy Communities Programme

Slovakia, along with Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary, with as much as 8 per cent of the population has one of the largest relative Roma populations, out of the total population of 5 400 000. Two-third of the Roma population live in Eastern and South Central Slovakia, which from 50% live in settlements lacking sufficient hygienic and infrastructural amenities.¹

The living conditions and the health status of Roma in Slovakia are worse as compared to that of their neighbours. As a result **the Association for Culture, Education and Communication (ACEC)** has launched **the Healthy Communities project**, implemented in 11 settlements in 2003 and 254 in 2015. As part of the project the implementation team collaborates with NGOs in Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary. The program is operated by Roma settlements inhabitants themselves. These Roma settlements inhabitants are identified, hired and trained by the central program management as health mediators (HM). HMs provides health services and collects data on the health status of the targeted population among other tasks. She also emphasized that employment is thereby increased, education in general has raised and health status of the community has improved.

The daily job of a Roma Health Mediator includes inviting people for mandatory vaccination and for preventive medical examinations. The examinations he makes include giving advice on medication, measuring blood pressure and providing first aid training for the communities. Roma Health Mediators know the communities, understand the cultural differences and provide a variety of services ranging from regularly visiting families and children to health education at schools and nurseries to collection of data. 99% of the work is done in the field; since we have engaged with the HM 180 localities have seen declines in the rate of scabies, fleas and rodents. The collaboration with a number of organizations and the training of HM (59% feels the need for further education) is key in ensuring the success of the program. The national program Healthy Communities' addresses the issue of trust and creates linkages between health care and social services through the Health Mediators. The project receives funding through the European Structural Funds which has been secured for the next 7 years.

¹ Healthy communities Slovakia. Available at:

http://acec.sk/sites/default/files/download/udalosti/healthy_communitiesplatform_m_kubor_koky.pdf



[Together for Better Health](#) – a pan European partnership to improve the health of Roma people living in isolated communities in Europe.

EPHA Roma Health Fellows under the [Roma Health Fellowship programme](#) sponsored by the Open Society Foundation

Benefits of the programme include improvement of Public Health of the Roma population, especially communicable diseases via immunization of children and adults, improvement of hygienic inform of access to water, food, housing, and waste management. Roma communities can have access to targeted health and social services. As a final outcome, via this programme Roma will be able to achieve complete and sustainable improvement of living and health standards. The implementation is done in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Interior, WHO representatives and the University of Prešov. As of now, 300 program recipients have found employment and for many of them this is the first job opportunity in their lives.

More information on that project is available at

<http://www.togetherforbetterhealth.eu/countries/slovakia/slovakia>

The joint pro-Roma civil society contribution to the public consultation on access to health services in the EU is available on the EPHA website at www.eph.org/6391