

## EVENT REPORT



## ROMA CONTRIBUTION TO A HEALTHY EUROPE

### Addressing Roma Health and Early Childhood Development to reduce health inequalities for the future of Europe

12 April 2018 • European Parliament, Brussels

Co-Hosted by:

MEP Mircea Diaconu, ALDE

MEP Soraya Post, S&D

## AIM OF THE MEETING

Taking stock of the past, this event organised by the European Public Health Alliance on 12 April 2018 in the European Parliament, aimed to highlight the Roma contribution to Europe's heritage, while promoting positive practices to overcome inequalities as part of a post-2020 EU Strategy which delivers on health and early childhood development. By contributing to efforts to successfully implement the current EU Framework and the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS), the meeting also provided the European Commission with inputs into the new strategy, which should be adequately resourced and developed to appropriately respond to the challenges of Roma and their families.

## EVENT THEMES

Part of the EU Roma Week in the European Parliament, the event gathered around 40 different stakeholders: representatives of the European Parliament, the European Commission, Member States, European and EU-level civil society, international Institutions and members of the Roma community, to increase understanding about the lessons learned from the implementation of the current EU Roma Framework, discuss key challenges in acknowledging the Roma contribution to Europe's heritage, and tackling inequalities in Roma health and early childhood development.

## PARTICIPANTS' CONTRIBUTIONS

MEP Soraya Post (S&D, Sweden) highlighted that:

***“there is a strong need to recognise antigypsyism - a specific form of discrimination targeting Roma – which does not fit EU fundamental values and strongly impacts access to healthcare and ECD”.***

This was strongly supported by MEP Mircea Diaconu (ALDE, Romania) who also highlighted the contribution of Roma to European heritage.

Nina Renshaw, Secretary General, European Public Health Alliance said:

***“In the health field we face the challenge that the Health programme and EU health action is under threat. It is crucial that the European Commission keeps its focus on Roma inclusion and that the new emerging issues do not push Roma off the agendas of EU national governments. Given the cross-border elements of Roma inclusion, it is important to recognize that no individual country can cope with the challenges of Roma exclusion. Only a coordinated effort at the EU level reaching all the way to the local level can bring a real and visible progress”***

Maja Jovanovic, Public Health Programme Coordinator, Open Society Foundations presented to participants the most recent findings of the last Roma Health status report carried out by the European Commission in August 2014:

***“life expectancy has gone even up to 20 years shorter than the majority population, infant mortality and child mortality rate - is 2-6 times higher than surrounding countries, the prevalence of infectious diseases – Hepatitis A, B and C, HIV/Aids, measles, meningitis and tuberculosis (TB), data are often old, small-scale or, in a few cases, collected during disease outbreak, particularly segregated Roma compared to the majority population”***

Further speakers such as **Rodrigo Ballester** (Cabinet of the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport), **Xavier Prats-Monné** (Director General, DG SANTE), **Jana Balazova** (DG Justice and Consumers), **Szilvia Pallaghy** (Open Society Foundations) and **Dominique Bé** (DG-EMPL) discussed the measures to tackle inequalities in health and early childhood development and how to combat social exclusion of Roma in Europe, also looking at policies and their impact on Roma lives. **Cosmin Boianiu** (Permanent Representation of Romania to EU), **Rozalia-Dana Varga** (Counsellor to the Prime Minister of Romania), **Agota Kovacs** (Norway Grants) and **Bianca Faragau-Tavares** (Eurocities) presented more specific findings from national level, contributing to the qualitative outcomes of the event.

A video contribution by EPHA highlighted the positive influence that sustained support, whether emotional or financial, can bring to the lives of disadvantaged Roma children.

In conclusion, the event allowed to provide the European Commission with inputs which should be adequately developed and supported/resourced in order to respond to the challenges experienced by Roma communities.



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