The role of national equality bodies on Roma (health) equality

Combatting inequalities in healthcare: a first step towards health equity for Roma
EPHA, 8 April 2021
Equinet Mission

Equinet promotes equality in Europe by supporting equality bodies to be independent and effective catalysts for more equal societies.
Equinet Members

- Network of national **equality bodies** (47 members from across Europe)
- Equality bodies set up on the basis of EU Equal Treatment Directives (2000/43/EC; 2004/113/EC; 2006/54/EC)
- **Diversity** among national equality bodies in terms of size, mandate, grounds, structure and experience
The work of equality bodies

Hard and soft powers

Functions laid down in EU Directives:

- Independent assistance to victims of discrimination
- Independent surveys and reports concerning discrimination
- Recommendations to policy makers on discrimination issues
- Exchange of information with European bodies

Wider functions accorded to Equality Bodies:

- Communication, awareness-raising and promotion of values
- Promotion of good practices
- Work with stakeholders
- Monitoring and supervision
Roma and Traveller inclusion: towards a new EU framework learning from the work of equality bodies

- **Perspective** prepared by Equinet’s Working Group on Policy Formation
- Based on a survey completed by 20 equality bodies in 20 jurisdictions
- Published in summer 2020

+ upcoming perspective and seminar on 'Equality, Diversity, and Non-Discrimination in Healthcare'
Key findings from Equinet's perspectives – areas of concern in healthcare

Particular focus by NEBs on Roma (alongside other groups)...
❖ Lack of health insurance (and documents)
❖ Uneven geographical spread of health services
❖ Discrimination when accessing health services
❖ Segregation of Roma women in maternity services
❖ Forced sterilisation
Key findings from Equinet's perspective – other areas of concern

- The other 3 areas from the previous EU Framework
- Under-reporting
- Systemic, institutional and structural discrimination
- Intersectionality, e.g. Roma women
- Poverty, socio-economic disadvantages
- Issues around policing (ethnic profiling, police violence)
- Public discourse (hate speech, hostility, stereotyping)
- Barriers to free circulation of migrant Roma
- Invisibility if Roma constitute a small proportion of the population
- Respect for Roma and Traveller culture and identity (info material in Romani, recognition of Roma history and culture)
Key findings from the Roma perspective – Covid-19

❖ **Covid-19** as a specific and difficult context, increasing the vulnerability of Roma communities:
  ❖ Typically poor health status, underlying conditions
  ❖ Overcrowded and poor living conditions, difficulty to follow strict hygiene protocols
  ❖ Public health measures and warnings not reaching Roma
  ❖ Existing socio-economic disadvantages exacerbated by economic crisis (e.g. unemployment, informal economy) and lockdown (e.g. access to education)
Relevant examples from Equinet's Covid-19 database

- Roma settlements with substandard living conditions, no access to drinking water and disinfectants, resulting in higher health risks
- Statement on including Roma people in decision-making
- Enforcement by police of emergency powers disproportionately affecting Travellers and Roma (including mistreatment and violence)
- Putting whole Roma settlement into quarantaine due to only one person breaking quarantaine regulations
- Public statements stereotyping marginalized Roma communities, including suggestion to restrict access to healthcare to certain groups
- Denial of access to services, including pharmacies
Entry points for policy

- **EU Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion and participation:**
  - 'Cut life expectancy gap by at least half, to ensure that by 2030 Roma women and men live 5 years longer'
- **Council Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation** (Member States should ensure effective equal access without barriers to quality healthcare and social services)
- **UN Sustainable Development Goals**
- **European Pillar of Social Rights** (principle 16: health care)
Together towards Roma Equality: Implementing the EU Roma Strategic Framework - key conclusions

(Equinet roundtable, 22 February 2021)

- Appalling situation on the ground
- Need for strong and effective, enforceable rules
- Create links between policy and financial tools, be strategic
- Solid monitoring and measurement is crucial
- Role for equality bodies in design, implementation and monitoring of national strategies
- Equality bodies have a potential for: monitoring (incl. case work and research), recommendations; communication, trainings & awareness-raising; supporting Roma participation
- The necessity of working in partnership
Where next?

- Realise and implement equality as a founding value of the EU
- A question of political will?
- Implement the EU framework and strong national frameworks
- Take a holistic approach: equality, inclusion, participation and the 4 sectoral objectives are all linked, no real progress until progress on all
- Use financial means wisely, including EU funds
- Work in partnerships – including civil society and equality bodies, strengthening both
THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

ANY QUESTIONS?

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