



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

**Combating inequalities in healthcare: a first step towards health equity for Roma**

EPHA, 8 April 2021



Cofunded by the Rights, Equality and  
Citizenship Programme of the European Union

[www.equineteurope.org](http://www.equineteurope.org)

# Equinet Mission

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



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# 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:

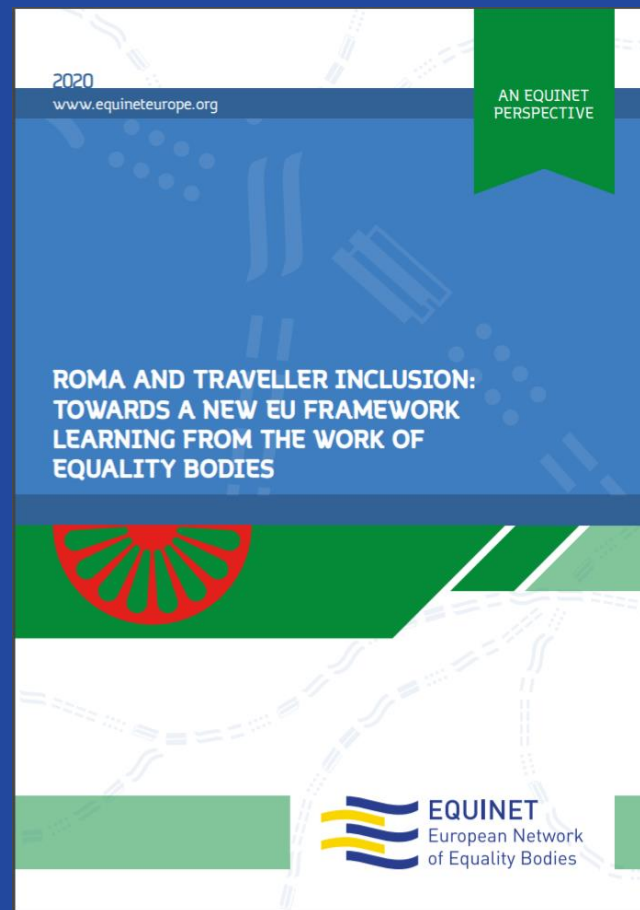
- Communication, awareness-raising and promotion of values
- Promotion of good practices
- Work with stakeholders
- Monitoring and supervision



# 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*'



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# 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 quarantine due to only one person breaking quarantine 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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