

European NGO Common Position on Roma Housing

Background

Across the European Union (EU), most Roma communities face challenging housing conditions. For many of them, the situation represents a housing emergency: living in informal settlements and irregular housing, at high risk of being forcibly evicted, with limited or non-existent access to public services, and subject to residential segregation. Research on housing by experts and NGOs shows that more than 1 million EU Roma citizens live in such dangerous and insecure conditions with the likelihood that the numbers will increase if nothing is done in the near future. Despite the adoption of the EU Roma Framework in 2011, EU and national policies failed to show any tangible improvements in Roma housing. Moreover, the European Commission and member state governments still fail to allocate adequate resources to implement housing objectives of the National Roma Integration Strategies. That is why the European Commission and member states should prioritise Roma housing in the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) and post-2020 Cohesion Policy.

Available expertise

Roma civil society organisations (CSOs) and experts on housing have a long record of generating knowledge and expertise on the housing problems of the Roma population in Europe. Some of this research has been supported with EU funds. Unfortunately, the European Commission and member states have not capitalised on this accumulated know-how, nor have they followed-up on the resulting policy and funding recommendations. Given this situation, the organisations listed here have joined forces to collect the expertise, information and analysis on the housing situation of Roma. This European NGO common position on Roma housing is the result of this joint effort.

This paper sets out the main findings on Roma housing from existing research, reports and knowledge by experts and CSOs, who stand ready to advise the European Commission and member states in addressing the housing emergency of the Roma population in Europe.

Main challenges

Anti-Gypsyism is a rising phenomenon across Europe. EU funds and programmes are an important incentive for member states to invest in Roma inclusion and to reverse this trend. Although the EU-level financial framework makes it possible to address some of the housing challenges, member states lack integrated, multi-fund programmes (i.e. combining the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund, ERDF and ESF) to address shortcomings in housing conditions, employment, education and healthcare as integrated projects.

The efficient use of funds has also been challenged by inadequate and ineffective targeting. In addition, the lack of inclusion policies, effective legislation and sufficient resources, as well as rising discrimination, have been playing a crucial role in blocking concrete ideas for solutions. Moreover, national mainstream policies often do not support the inclusion of Roma and other marginalised groups. Consequently, the lack of social housing policies and weak welfare policies hinder the efficient

implementation and sustainability of inclusive housing programmes. Nonetheless, the main impediment to solving the housing issue of Roma in Europe remains the lack of political openness and accountability of member states to enforce existing policy and funding proposals.

We believe that the European Commission is determined to address the housing problem by using all its available legal, policy and funding instruments. The preparation of the forthcoming MFF post-2020 proposal is a unique opportunity for the European Commission to move forward. Below we have prepared a number of key recommendations to address the housing challenges of Roma in Europe. As a first step, the European Commission should:

- 1) Establish a working group on Roma housing, consisting of the most knowledgeable and legitimate experts and Roma CSOs; and
- 2) Explicitly include **Roma** among the target groups of the MFF post-2020 proposal.

Recommendations for tackling housing exclusion of Roma:

In order to ensure access to adequate and affordable housing for all, including Roma, in line with the European Social Pillar principles, the European Union should, in the framework of the post-2020 MFF:

1. Develop its Roma Policy Framework for the post-2020 period and require member states to develop their own national integration policies for the new MFF period;
2. Take into account indicators and measures which deal with anti-discrimination, more specifically anti-Gypsyism, when promoting the inclusion of marginalised Roma communities within the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) framework, in line with the requirements of the racial equality directive 2000/43/EC;
3. Ensure targeted funding for addressing Roma housing exclusion from a dedicated single fund, which tackles extreme poverty. Alternatively, if such a fund will not be launched in the MFF, then the European Union should ensure that substantial resources are made specifically available in national programming for inclusive housing projects accessible for Roma, in the framework of multi-fund programmes combining the ERDF and ESF;
4. Strengthen the use of existing funding such as the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived for more structural support to Roma; consider using financial instruments and funds such as the Investment Plan for Europe, the Council of Europe Development Bank and the European Investment Bank to ensure that investments in housing for marginalised communities are included in the next MFF;
5. In line with previous EU achievements, further strengthen desegregation; tackle segregated living conditions in accordance with the diversity and complexity of Roma housing challenges in Europe, taking into account the specific situation of individual families. While investments should not boost new segregation practices, future EU funds should focus on quality housing and better living conditions for Roma;
6. Include the participation of Roma families in the decision-making, design and implementation of housing projects, as a key condition for the European Commission and member states to approve related funds;
7. Strengthen the role of ex-ante conditionality by: 1) requiring that national programming is in compliance with the (updated) National Roma Strategies; 2) monitoring that national mainstream policies support (or at least do not hinder) the integration of Roma; and 3) developing effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms of national and local Roma inclusion action plans;

8. Ensure that national programming allows for:
- long-term, flexible local actions in the framework of complex and integrated projects with the participation of local communities and the provision of methodological support to local actors and municipalities in planning and implementation, including supporting legal counselling for Roma to raise awareness about their housing rights;
 - funding schemes for small municipalities;
 - funding schemes to support the regularisation and upgrading of irregular but adequate housing (i.e. illegally built houses) in Central and Eastern Europe;
 - funding schemes to provide alternative housing options for all those living in degrading conditions across Europe (e.g. slums, containers, inadequate houses), in consultation with the affected populations and organisations supporting them;
 - funding various types of secure and affordable housing solutions, including public and social housing, i.e. by: (a) making use of vacant houses and vacant offices; (b) developing cooperative housing projects; (c) including a mandatory percentage of funding to be invested in social and public housing projects for every new EU-funded private housing development project; (d) where sufficient housing allowance is available, establishing social rental agencies and special guarantee funds to draw on supply in the private rental market for social housing purposes.

European and national organisations that support this position:

1. Disutni, Albania
2. Roma Active, Albania
3. Roma Rights Women Center, Albania
4. Roma Versitas Albania
5. Romano Kham Albania
6. Treja Center , Albania
7. Romano Centro, Austria
8. European Network Against Racism, Belgium
9. European Public Health Alliance, Belgium
10. European Roma Grassroots Organizations, Belgium
11. Open Society European Policy Institute, Belgium
12. European Roma Grassroots Organizations, Belgium
13. Open Society European Policy Institute, Belgium
14. European Public Health Alliance, Belgium
15. European Network Against Racism, Belgium
16. Kali Sara, Bosnia and Herzegovina
17. Mladi Romi Vitez, Bosnia and Herzegovina
18. Amare Phala Association – Kubrat, Bulgaria
19. Center for strategies for issues of minorities, Varna, Bulgaria
20. Community center Roma Vazovo 2007 – Municipality of Isperih, Bulgaria
21. For better life - Asaparuhovo /Varna, Bulgaria
22. GORD Association, Razgrad, Bulgaria
23. Hayachi Association – Novi Pazar, Bulgaria
24. Mother center – Alternativa Association – Byala Slatina, Bulgaria
25. Partnership in action Association – Varna, Bulgaria
26. Roma solidarity foundation, Petrich, Bulgaria
27. Sevgi Association – Zavet, Bulgaria
28. Sun for everyone Association, Peshtera, Bulgaria
29. The health of Roma – Sliven, Bulgaria
30. Association LARGO, Bulgaria

31. Barvalipe, Bulgaria
32. Boychinovtsi Initiative Group/RSC, Bulgaria
33. C.E.G.A., Bulgaria
34. Coalition of civic organisations Stolipinovo (15 organisations), Bulgaria
35. Community Action Group – Septemvri, Bulgaria
36. Community Action Group – Aytos, Bulgaria
37. Community Action Group - Bratsigovo, Bulgaria
38. Community Action Group – Dobrich, Bulgaria
39. Community Action Group – Nikola Kozlevo, Bulgaria
40. Community Action Group - Samokov, Bulgaria
41. Community Action Group – Slivo Pole, Bulgaria
42. Community Action Group - Sopot, Bulgaria
43. Community Action Group - Sungurlare, Bulgaria
44. Community Action Group – Tvarditca, Bulgaria
45. Equal Opportunities Association, Bulgaria
46. Fondation Roma Plovdiv, Bulgaria
47. Foundation Mladenovo, Bulgaria
48. Future Rakitovo Foundation, Bulgaria
49. Initiative Group/RSC, Montana- Bulgaria
50. Initiative Group/RSC, Rakovski, Bulgaria
51. Initiative Group/RSC, Sliven, Bulgaria
52. Initiative Group/RSC, Vidin, Bulgaria
53. Integro Association, Bulgaria
54. Lider Association, Bulgaria
55. Local action Group – Borovan, Bulgaria
56. Local Action Group – Botevgrad, Bulgaria
57. Local action Group – Shumen, Bulgaria
58. National Coalition INTELLECT - Bulgaria
59. National Network of Health Mediators (from over 130 municipalities), Bulgaria
60. No Box Bulgaria, Bulgaria
61. Northwest Development Association, Bulgaria
62. Pro European Network, Bulgaria
63. Radio Stolipinovo, Bulgaria
64. Regional Network of Health Mediators Montana, Bulgaria
65. Roma- Lom Foundation- Liubomir Dimitrov, Bulgaria
66. Roma Standing Conference (100 organisations), Bulgaria
67. Roma World 21st Century, Bulgaria
68. Sdruzhenie “Integro” – Municipality of Vetovo, Bulgaria
69. Society of Roma women, Bulgaria
70. Youth Club Stolipinovo, Bulgaria
71. Association of Roma Entrepreneurs - Ladislav Lesko, Czech Republic
72. Association of Roma Parents - Zaneta Mirgova, Czech Republic
73. Awen Amenca - Miroslav Klempar, Czech Republic
74. Barvalipe club (network of 60 members - intellectuals, businessmen and youth), Czech Republic
75. Gypsy Mercedes - Jan Kandrak, Czech Republic
76. La Godaha - Jaroslav Horvath, Czech Republic
77. Lavouse - Petr Durdy, Czech Republic
78. Movement of Roma Students - Ladislav Cermak, Czech Republic
79. Platform for Social Housing (umbrella organisations of 40 NGOs and 44 experts in social housing and homelessness), Czech Republic
80. RDS CR - Miroslav Tancos, Czech Republic
81. RDS Ostrava - Jan Malar, Czech Republic

82. Roma Future - Irena Klemparova, Czech Republic
83. Romanonet, Czech Republic
84. Slovo 21, Czech Republic
85. Upre Roma - Monika Pechova, Czech Republic
86. European Roma and Travelers Forum, France
87. La Voix des Roms, France
88. Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, Germany
89. Ariadne Foundation, Antonia Haga, Hungary
90. Association of Roma Minority Representatives and Spokespeople of Nograd County, Hungary
91. Autonomia, Hungary
92. Bela Racz, Hungary
93. Csaba Olah, Hungary
94. Dezso Szegedi, Hungary
95. Erzsebet Anita Nemet, Hungary
96. Gabor Daroczi, Hungary
97. János Orsós, Hungary
98. Khetanipe Foundation, Szilvia Lakatos, Hungary
99. Phiren Amenca, Anna Daroczi, Hungary
100. Roland Ferkovics, Hungary
101. Roma Leadership Conference (20 organisations), Hungary
102. Roma Press Center, Hungary
103. Roma Standing Conference, Hungary
104. Roma Students Group (CEU Roma alumni), Hungary
105. Roma Versitas, Henriett Dinok, Hungary
106. Szilvia Rezmuves, Hungary
107. Uccu Foundation, Szilvia Szénási, Hungary
108. We Belong Here Association, Hungary
109. Associazione 21 luglio, Italy
110. Accademia Europea di Arte Rom, Italy
111. Associazione Amici di Zefferino, Italy
112. Associazione FuturArteRom, Italy
113. Associazione Liberi, Italy
114. Associazione Museo del Viaggio Fabrizio De Andrè, Italy
115. Associazione Nevo Drom Bolzano, Italy
116. Associazione Nevo Drom Trento, Italy
117. Associazione New Romalen, Italy
118. Associazione Rom in Progress , Italy
119. Associazione Roma Onlus, Italy
120. Associazione Romani Kriss, Italy
121. Associazione Romanò Glaso, Italy
122. Associazione Romanò Ilo, Italy
123. Associazione Romni Onlus, Italy
124. Associazione Rowni Roma, Italy
125. Associazione Sinti in Trentino Alto Adige, Italy
126. Associazione Sinti Italia, Italy
127. Associazione Sinti Italiani di Prato, Italy
128. Associazione Sinti Nel Mondo, Italy
129. Associazione Sinti Project International, Italy
130. Associazione Stay Human, Italy
131. Associazione Sucar Drom, Italy
132. Associazione Them Romanò, Italy
133. Associazione Upre Roma, Italy
134. Cooperativa Romano Drom, Italy

135. Federazione FederArteRom, Italy
136. Women Network Italy, Italy
137. Kosova Education Center, Kosovo
138. ADDR “Sonce”, Macedonia
139. AMSHR Shtip, Macedonia
140. Aner “Romska solza” Prilep, Macedonia
141. Association “Bairska Svetlina” Bitola, Macedonia
142. Association “KHAM” Delchevo, Macedonia
143. Association “MIR” Skopje, Macedonia
144. Association for democratic development of Roma “Nevo Dzivdipe” Vinica, Macedonia
145. Association for protecting the rights of Roma- Shtip, Macedonia
146. Association for women and youth “LULUDI” Skopje, Macedonia
147. Association Initiative for social change InSoC- Skopje, Macedonia
148. Association of Roma women “DAJA” Kumanovo, Macedonia
149. Coalition of RCSO's “Khetane”, Macedonia
150. HCAR “Mesechina Debar” Debar, Macedonia
151. HCAR “Mesechina”- Gostivar, Macedonia
152. Institute for policy research and analysis “Romalitico”, Macedonia
153. National Roma Centrum, Macedonia
154. Platform of RCSO's “Our future- Our responsibility”, Macedonia
155. Research and Policy Analyses – Romalitico, Macedonia
156. Roma business information center, Macedonia
157. Roma community center “Drom”, Macedonia
158. Roma community empowerment and organizing association “Romano Avazi”, Macedonia
159. Roma Culture and Media Center Barikanipe, Macedonia
160. Romaversitas Macedonia (network of Roma students and alumni), Macedonia
161. RROMA- Kratovo, Macedonia
162. Simbyosiz 12, Macedonia
163. Young Roma, Montenegro
164. Center for Roma Initiative, Montenegro
165. Civic Alliance, Montenegro
166. Koračajte sa nama -Phiren amenca, Montenegro
167. Alianta Pentru Unitatea romilor Braila, Romania
168. Alianța pentru Unitatea Romilor, Romania
169. Asociatia Alesilor Locali Romi, Romania
170. Asociatia Alternativa Sociale Millenium, Romania
171. Asociatia Argintarilor din Romania
172. Asociatia Cultura si Traditie Rom Gal, Romania
173. Asociatia Initiativa Locala Roman, Romania
174. Asociația Meșteșugarilor și Comercianților Tradiționali Romi, Romania
175. Asociatia pentru Dezvoltare Comunitara Braila, Romania
176. Asociatia pentru Gandire Reflexiva si Evolutie Strategica, Romania
177. Asociatia Pro Roma, Romania
178. Centrul pentru Integrare si Dezvoltare Sociala, Romania
179. CRONO, Romania
180. Democratic Federation of Roma from Romania (6 national organisations), Romania
181. E-Romnja (network of Roma women leaders), Romania
182. Grow Innovative Advisory, Romania
183. Habitat for Humanity, Romania
184. MakeBetter Association, Romania,
185. Musicantia Dublin, Romania
186. Nevo Parudimos, Romania
187. New Perspective, Romania

188. PACT Foundation, Romania
189. Roma Entrepreneurship Development Initiative, Romania
190. RomaJust Roma Lawyers, Romania
191. UCYRR, Romania
192. Uniunea Națională a Comunităților de Romi, Romania
193. Association Devleski Urma, Serbia
194. Association Roma Heart, Krusevac, Serbia
195. Association of Roma Bejas Rumunka, Serbia
196. Association of Roma in Beocin, Serbia
197. Association of Roma in Zajecar, Serbia
198. Association of Roma Students, Serbia
199. Association of Roma, Serbia
200. Association Phralipe, Serbia
201. Educational Roma Center, Serbia
202. Ki Rrota, Serbia
203. League of Roma – National Association of Roma organisations, Serbia
204. Roma Association Bela Romkinja, Serbia
205. Roma Cultural Center, Serbia
206. Roma Economic Center in Vojvodina, Serbia
207. Roma Student Association, Serbia
208. Roma Women’s Initiative, Serbia
209. Romani Kris, Serbia
210. Vojvodinian Roma Center for Democracy, Serbia
211. Association Jointly for Development of Gemer Region, Slovakia
212. Association of Young Roma, Slovakia
213. Inspiromax, Slovakia
214. Municipality Janice - Gejza Berky, Slovakia
215. Roma Advocacy and Research Center, Slovakia
216. Roma Advocacy Network (30 Roma mayors and advisors), Slovakia
217. Asociación Antixenofobia, Valencia, Spain
218. Asociación de mujeres Gitanas Feministas por la Diversidad Valladolid, Spain
219. Asociación de mujeres gitanas Romí, Granada, Spain
220. Asociación de mujeres gitanas Sinando Kali, Jaén, Spain
221. Asociación espacios de participacion socio-cultural Mistos, Asturias, Spain
222. Asociación Gitanas Feministas Cartagena, Spain
223. Asociación Gitanas Feministas por la Diversidad Madrid, Spain
224. Asociación Payas y Gitanas Romi, Palencia, Spain
225. Asociación Punjab, Castellón, Spain
226. Asociación Soci-Educativa Intercultural ASIEM, Albacete, Spain
227. Asociación Sociocultural Crecer 7 (Jose Carmona Santiago), Spain
228. Association Ververipen, Spain
229. Fundació Privada Pere Closa, Spain
230. Kale Amenge (Roma Scholars and Policy Experts), Spain
231. Kali Zor, Spain
232. Khetanipe Girona Associació Intercultural, Spain
233. Mediterranean Roma Associations Federation, Turkey
234. Early Childhood Program, Open Society Foundations, United Kingdom