



EUROPEAN ROMA GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS (ERGO) NETWORK

Implementing the EU Roma Strategic Framework Roma access to healthcare and long-term care

23 November 2022
10:00 – 13:00

Conference Report



Conference Programme

10h Opening remarks

- *Soraya Post*, ERGO Network Board Chair, former Member of the European Parliament
- *Lavinia Banu*, European Commission, DG Justice and Consumers
- *Hon. Peter Pollák*, Member of the European Parliament, EPP / Slovakia

10h15 Roma access to healthcare and long-term care: Discussion on the ERGO Network national case studies and recommendations

Moderator: *Tomas de Jong*, European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)

- *Sri Kumar Vishwanathan*, *Vzájemné Soužití (Life Together)* / ERGO Network
- *Philippe Seidel*, AGE Platform Europe
- *Marine Uldry*, European Disability Forum (EDF)
- *Camille Butin*, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF-EN)
- *Susanna Ulinski*, European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
- Exchange with the audience

11h20 Comfort break

11h35 The implementation of the EU Roma Strategic Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation: State of play of the National Roma Strategic Frameworks and next steps

Moderator: *Abriel Schiefflers*, Eurodiaconia

- *Isabela Mihalache*, European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network
- *Zuzana Havírová*, National Roma Civil Monitoring coordinator, Slovakia
- *Sia Săraru*, National Roma Contact Point, Ministry of Investments and European Projects, Romania
- *Adriatik Hasantari*, Roma Active Albania
- *Andrey Ivanov*, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
- Exchange with the audience

12h50 Closing Remarks

- *Kateřina Stařová*, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic
- *Jamen Gabriela Hrabaňová*, ERGO Network Director

13h Lunch (for on-site participants, outside the Mundo-b Conference Room)



This conference was kindly supported by the European Union Programme for Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) and by the German Federal Foreign Office.



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On 23 November, ERGO Network held its annual Policy Conference, dedicated to Roma access to healthcare and long-term care and to taking stock of the implementation of, and civil society participation in, the European and National Roma Strategic Frameworks.



A significant health inequality gap exists between the Roma and the majority population, across every area of physical and mental health and wellbeing, including rates of suicide, disability, life expectancy, and infant mortality. The Covid-19 pandemic laid bare and worsened a pre-existing dire situation. It is high time the European Union and national governments delivered on ensuring access to healthcare and long-term care for all, including Europe's Roma. The event launched ERGO Network's research report on "[Roma access to healthcare and long-term care](#)", based on six national case studies carried out in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain. The main findings and recommendations will feed into the delivery of the EU Roma Strategic Framework, the Social Pillar Action Plan, and the European Care Strategy, among others.

With the adoption of the EU Roma Strategic Framework up to 2030, governments were asked to develop National Roma Strategic Frameworks (NRSFs) both in EU Member States and Western Balkan countries. To ensure their effective implementation, a robust and continued monitoring of the entire policy process is needed. Civil society in EU Member States received funding from the European Commission to monitor the elaboration and adoption process of these National Roma Strategic Frameworks through the Roma Civil Monitor (RCM) project. The second part of the event assessed the state of play of the NRSFs in EU and enlargement countries and their alignment with the EU Roma Strategic Framework and linked Council Recommendation, as well as of the Roma involvement in the drafting process. In addition, it discussed follow-up steps in the implementation of the National Roma Strategic Frameworks at EU and national levels.

The event was well attended with over 70 participants on site and online, and it brought together ERGO Network national members from the grassroots level, as well as other national practitioners, European civil society organisations, policy-makers from the European institutions and national governments, and other relevant stakeholders.

Read a summary of the proceedings below and access the full recording ([part 1](#), [part 2](#), [part 3](#)).



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OPENING REMARKS

Soraya Post

ERGO Network Chair of the Board, former Member of the European Parliament

Ms Post welcomed participants and provided a brief introduction of the situation of Roma living in Europe, particularly concerning healthcare, stressing ERGO Network's commitment to combatting antigypsyism and Roma poverty, while strengthening (pro-)Roma civil society participation in decision-making at grassroots, national and European level. She outlined the structure of the event and encouraged participants and guests to join the debate and use their hearts and their brains for a better Europe for Roma. Ms Post concluded by thanking speakers, moderators, and guests, and by wishing all attendants a fruitful morning of discussion.

👉 [Access the full intervention here.](#)



Lavinia Banu

European Commission, DG Justice and Consumers

Ms Banu reminded that, as part of its EU Roma Strategic Framework, the European Commission had called on Member States to submit national strategies by September 2021 and report on their implementation every two years. She indicated that, on the basis of the submitted National Roma Strategic Frameworks (NRSFs), the Commission would publish its Communication Report assessing these Frameworks in mid-December, together with two Staff Working Documents. Ms Banu concluded by highlighting that the Commission would monitor progress toward the 2030 targets, drawing on surveys carried out by the European Fundamental Rights Agency and input from civil society, while there would also be an in-depth mid-term evaluation of the new 10-year plan in its entirety.

👉 [Access the full intervention here.](#)



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Hon. Peter Pollák MEP
European Parliament, EPP Group, Slovakia

Mr Peter Pollák remarked in his video address that the situation of Roma health was very bad, linked to catastrophic living conditions and malnutrition. He highlighted that the Roma still faced obstacles in accessing care, such as lack of health insurance and discrimination, which contributed to a health inequality gap between the Roma and the majority. Mr Pollák called on local authorities and grassroots actors to make full use of EU funds to remedy this situation.

👉 [Watch the full video intervention here.](#)

FIRST PANEL

Roma access to adequate healthcare and long-term care



Sri Kumar Vishwanathan
Life Together (Czech Republic) / ERGO Network

Mr Vishwanathan presented the main findings of the ERGO Network 2022 research report on Roma access to healthcare and long-term care, based on case studies carried out in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain. The key messages:

1. *In all 6 countries, social determinants greatly influence a poor Roma state of health.*
2. *High costs and gaps in health insurance coverage are significant deterrents for Roma.*
3. *Limited healthcare and long-term care infrastructure and staff shortages are prevalent in rural and remote Roma communities.*
4. *Roma health mediators play a key positive role which deserves better support.*
5. *The Roma continue to face widespread antigypsyism in healthcare and long-term care.*
6. *Roma communities and their NGOs must be involved to build trust and improve take-up.*

👉 [Access the full PowerPoint presentation here, and the research report here.](#)



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Philippe Seidel

AGE Platform Europe

Mr Seidel underlined the need for mutual learning between Roma organisations and those representing older persons, for both sides to better understand and tackle ageism and antigypsyism, which expose older Roma to double discrimination. He highlighted three important dimensions for joint work: ensuring healthy environments where people can thrive throughout the lifecycle; supporting more home-based and community-based care, empowering patients while combatting distrust in the system; and upholding the rights of migrant informal carers, who are most often women, many of them older.



🔗 [Access the full intervention here](#), and the [AGE Platform 2020 Barometer on older Roma here](#).

Marine Uldry

European Disability Forum (EDF)



Ms Uldry spoke about the plight of Roma with disabilities when trying to access healthcare and long-term care, as they face intersectional discrimination, impaired access to consultations and treatment, misdiagnoses, and an unwelcoming environment which leads to distrust. She called for better convergence at national and EU level between disability and Roma policies, including the EU Roma Strategic Framework and the EU Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities. Ms Uldry concluded by announcing a joint “Briefing on discrimination and social exclusion of Roma with disabilities” by the European Disability Forum and ERGO Network, released on World Human Rights Day (10 December).

🔗 [Access the full intervention here](#), and the [EDF – ERGO Network joint Briefing here](#).

Camille Butin

International Planned Parenthood Federation – European Network (IPPF-EN)

Ms Butin pointed to synergies between the key messages and findings of the report and IPPF-EN’s own policy recommendations from their projects *My Body My Rights* and *Youth Voices Youth Choices*. In particular, she described significant, systemic barriers faced by Roma in accessing sexual and reproductive healthcare (SRH), such as affordability, availability, and inclusiveness. Ms Butin echoed the call for affordable services, mobile health teams, prioritising SRH in a rights-based approach, training healthcare professionals to stem antigypsyism, supporting Roma health mediators, and involving and empowering Roma communities.



🔗 [Access the full intervention here](#), and [IPPF’s policy recommendations on Roma SRH here](#).



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Susanna Ulinski

European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion



Ms Ulinski provided an overview of the recently released European Care Strategy, which includes two proposed Council Recommendations – on childcare and on long-term care. She insisted on the lifelong and person-centred approaches, supporting individual dignity and fundamental rights for all. Ms Ulinski stated that the package focussed on improving the situation of both care receivers and carers, through better care services, better working conditions, better work-life balance, more investment in care, and better monitoring of progress. She specifically highlighted the Council Recommendation on long-term care, which looks at affordability, availability, and quality of care, as well as working conditions for carers.

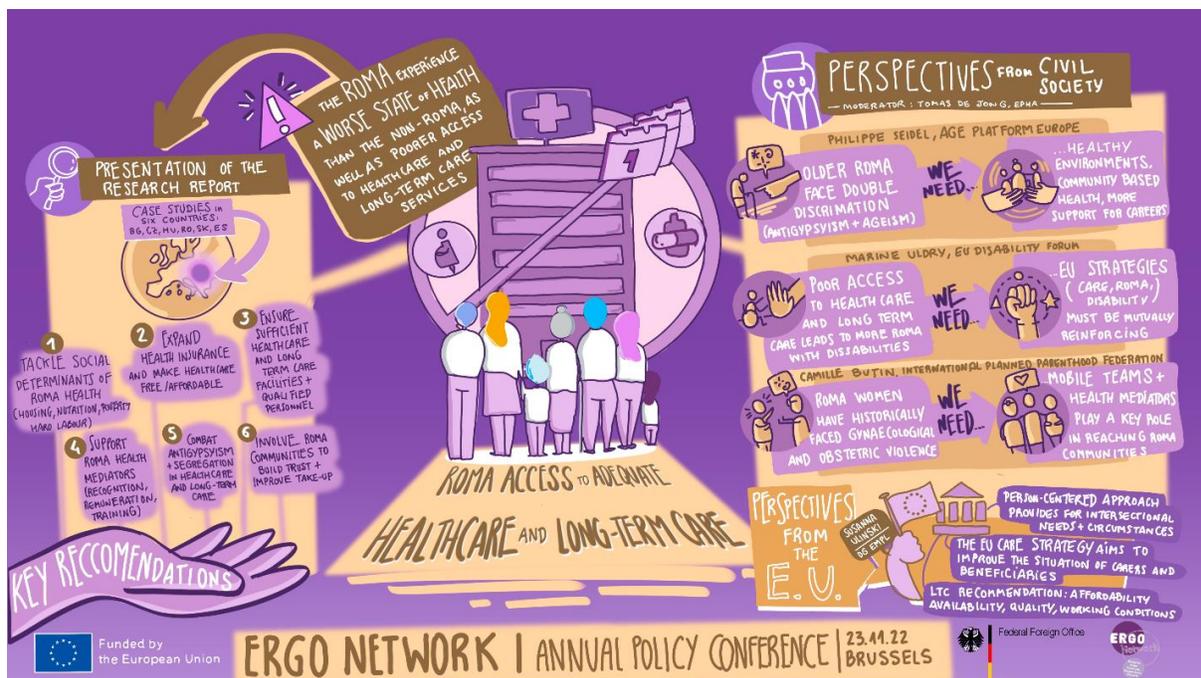
☞ [Access the full PowerPoint presentation here](#), and more information on the European Care Strategy [here](#).

Tomas de Jong (moderator)

European Public Health Alliance (EPA) – Roma Health Network (RHN)

Mr de Jong reiterated the key messages of ERGO Network’s report: the social determinants of health, the cost and availability of healthcare, the key role of health mediators, and fighting antigypsyism. He recalled the panellists’ insights about mainstreaming healthcare in other policy areas, about lack of access to care leading to early disability, and about the empowerment of Roma women. Mr de Jong expressed hope that the European Care Strategy would help address some of the identified challenges, which mirror findings from EPA’s own work, including a recent position paper on Roma health and housing by its Roma Health Network (RHN).

☞ [Access the EPA/RHN position paper “Roma Health and Housing: Filling in the Gaps” here](#).



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SECOND PANEL

The implementation of the EU and National Roma Strategic Frameworks



Abriel Schiefflers (*moderator*) Eurodiaconia

Ms Schiefflers welcomed the participants and speakers of the second panel. Before passing the floor to the latter, she took the opportunity to present to the audience a recent publication by Eurodiaconia, entitled “Addressing Barriers for Roma to Access Employment”, based on input from their own members who provide services to vulnerable groups in 32 countries.

☞ *Access Eurodiaconia’s report on barriers to Roma employment [here](#).*

Isabela Mihalache European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network

Ms Mihalache presented the main findings of the synthesis of the monitoring reports about the quality of the EU Member States’ new National Roma Strategic Frameworks (NRSFs), developed by civil society organisations participating in the Roma Civil Monitoring (RCM) 2021-2015 project. She indicated that participation of Roma stakeholders in the drafting of the NRSFs was deemed generally positive compared to the previous cycle. Ms Mihalache’s presentation further reviewed national measures on antigypsyism, recognition of Roma diversity, segregation in education and housing, and social protection and poverty, as included in the analysed NRSFs. She also listed a number of areas which could have received more attention in the national frameworks, and discussed processes such as monitoring, funding, and the role of the National Roma Contact Points, as well as put forward recommendations for both the EU and the national level.

☞ *Access the full PowerPoint presentation [here](#), and see more about the RCM project [here](#).*



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Zuzana Havírová

Roma Civil Monitor national coordinator, Slovakia

Ms Havírová described the drafting process of the Slovak National Roma Strategic Framework, highlighting particularly the involvement of Roma communities (and specifically of Roma women). She stressed efforts made around the adoption of a definition of antigypsyism and the implementation of related measures. Ms Havírová also presented several good provisions aimed at strengthening Roma participation in decision-making, as well as pointed out to a number of implementation activities which are already ongoing in Slovakia. She concluded by stating that the Roma Civil Monitor coordinators will continue their monitoring and reporting on these processes.



🔗 [Access the full PowerPoint presentations here.](#)

Sia Săraru

National Roma Contact Point, Romania



Ms Săraru provided participants with an overview of the Romanian National Roma Strategic Framework (NRSF) and its objectives, covering education, employment, health, and housing, as well as Roma culture and identity and the fight against antigypsyism. She presented the work of the National Roma Contact Point, including monitoring and evaluation of the NRSF and reporting to the European Commission, mutual learning and dissemination, as well as promoting Roma inclusion through European Funds. Ms Săraru also highlighted some of the tools used, such as a web portal for exchanging good practices, an interactive map, and some concrete local initiatives.

🔗 [Access the full PowerPoint presentation here, and visit the Romanian NRCP website here.](#)

Adriatik Hasantari

Roma Active Albania

Mr Hasantari praised the participatory process of drafting the National Roma Strategic Frameworks in enlargement countries but stressed that cooperation with Roma stakeholders needed to continue during the implementation phase, or the strategies would remain ambitious documents with no political will behind them. Mr Hasantari described good practices from the work of (pro-)Roma organisations in the Western Balkans and Turkey, such as the successful Most Roma-Friendly Mayor Award. He urged decision-makers not to use crises (the war, the pandemic, inflation) to excuse inaction on Roma inclusion.



🔗 [Access the full intervention here.](#)



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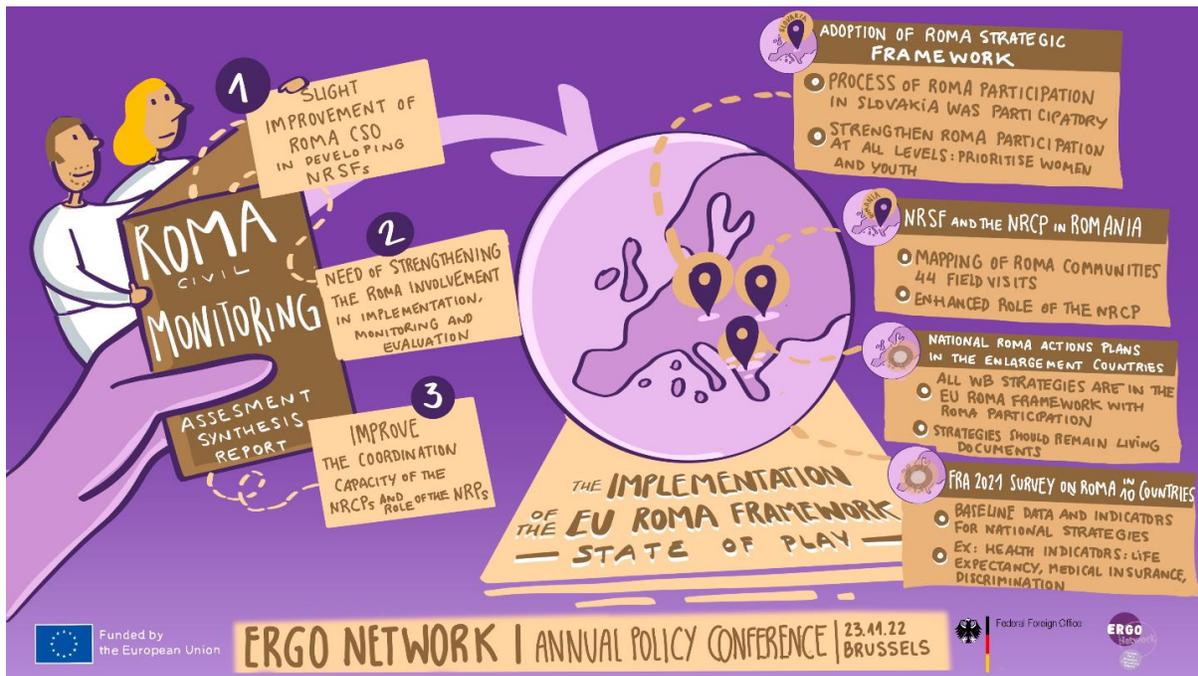
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Andrey Ivanov

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

Mr Ivanov offered participants insights from the work and data collection on the National Roma Strategic Frameworks of the Fundamental Rights Agency, focusing particularly on the monitoring of the health objective. He described the headline and secondary indicators for this work, where life expectancy is the key outcome indicator as Member States are called upon by the EU Roma Framework to reduce the Roma life expectancy gap by half. Mr Ivanov also described the work around the secondary indicators of coverage of health insurance as well as discrimination in accessing healthcare. He concluded by defining the situation as worrying, with few countries performing well, but expressed hope that other Member States would join the trend.

🔗 [Access the full PowerPoint presentation here and the latest FRA Roma survey here.](#)



CLOSING REMARKS

Kateřina Stařov

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Czech Republic

Ms Stařov referred to the importance of dedicating more policy attention to access to healthcare and long-term care, particularly for vulnerable groups such as the Roma. She underlined that this process should be seen in conjunction with the overall delivery on the EU Roma Strategic Framework and its objectives on housing, employment, education, and poverty. Ms Stařov concluded by stressing the need to closely involve Roma communities and their representatives in these efforts.



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Jamen Gabriela Hrahaňová
Director, ERGO Network

Ms Hrahaňová thanked speakers, moderators, the ERGO Network members and staff, as well as all participants who took the time to join the event in Brussels or online. She reminded everybody that all conference proceedings and materials would be shared and asked participants to fill in the evaluation survey (see below). Ms Hrahaňová concluded by reaffirming ERGO Network's commitment to continue to work together with European institutions and all other stakeholders, to make sure that Roma rights and inclusion become a reality also at the grassroots level.

👉 *Watch the full closing remarks via the [event recording](#).*



*This report was drafted by **Amana Ferro**, Senior Policy Adviser
with the ERGO Network staff team in Brussels.*

Graphic recording provided by [Ale Listens and Draws](#).

*We would be grateful if you took a moment to fill out [this brief evaluation survey](#)
(project reference: 101051353; title of the event: ERGO Network Policy Conference).*

*To find out more about this event, or about ERGO Network's work,
please don't hesitate to [get in touch](#) with us.*



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