

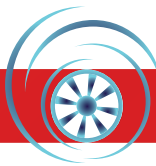


ROMA
INTEGRATION
2020

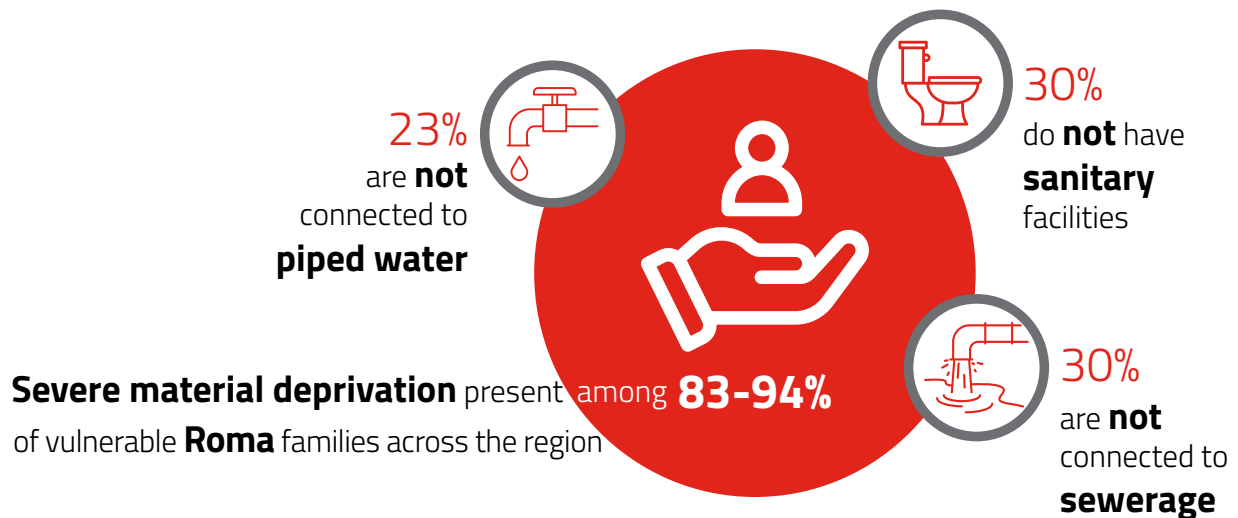
Regional Cooperation Council

RECOMMENDATIONS

On Improving Roma Targeting in the
Housing Policies of the Western Balkans



Based on 2017 Regional Roma Survey¹, among the surveyed Roma households across the Western Balkans region



Roma are **not** in the position to **change** their **housing** situation without proper **support by the authorities**¹.

Efforts to resolve the housing situation of Roma in a sustainable way are limited and insufficient.

Those are mainly **funded** through **donors** and **not** properly **linked to the mainstream policies** in housing, such as the legalisation of illegal objects or social housing.



In an effort to inform on the prevailing situation of Roma housing and the current approaches to change it, focusing on legalisation and social housing, through holistic approach for creating sustainable living conditions, the Roma Integration 2020 organized a regional conference on 'Holistic Approach to Housing of Roma in the Enlargement Region' in May 2018, gathering more than 80 government officials in charge of Roma Integration from the Western Balkans and Turkey and other relevant stakeholders. This brochure depicts the recommendations resulting from this event.

General conclusion

Housing efforts disconnected from overall socio-economic integration efforts may further exacerbate the situation

Providing only a housing unit, without urban and social infrastructure, access to employment and other public services, cultural and identity considerations, put Roma in the risk of losing the obtained housing and may further contribute to exclusion and segregation.

Introduce a new approach to the housing needs of Roma

considering the whole reality of their situation and ensuring measures designed to achieve sustainable living conditions with the international documents that guarantee the human right to housing.

Provide a full social integration package along the housing to Roma

as it would allow for a more efficient response to some of the common challenges within the enlargement region.

Improve horizontal cross-institutional cooperation between local and other levels of governance

To tackle the issues of increased homelessness and insecurity of tenure, problems related to legalisation, poverty affecting the sustainability of housing units and the lack of accompanying infrastructure.

Prevent perpetuated exclusion and ghettoization

Through proper housing policies and overall efforts in addressing the wider issue of prejudice within societies across the region.

Legalisation



Legalisation should be considered before other solutions whenever possible, as most feasible, least expensive and in line with the human rights standards and the principle of minimizing evictions.

All the economies in the region have adopted legislation, with similar procedures, but in general **these procedures are not well regulated** with the legalisation, as legislation and its social impact are not duly considered. The legislation across the region does not always regulate evictions and relocations, nor explicitly activates the social housing legislation.

Recommendations

Support **tailored** informational **outreach** on legalisation, urban and reconfiguration plans.

Provide **financial aid** for meeting the requirements for legalisation, including **fees and other related costs**.

(e.g. price reduction, price exemption, covering the cost of land purchase or donating the land in case it is publicly owned; limiting the maximum level of legalisation related expenses, including when municipalities have the power to decide on the fees; exemption from or reducing the fees; allowing for payment in instalments; etc.)

Establish a **stronger connection** between legalisation and social housing programmes for the **reconstruction of housing units** up to the standard required for legalisation.

Adopt specific **evidence based legalisation** provisions for vulnerable groups, including Roma, to ensure holistic approach to housing and activation of social housing and social protection legislation.

Where existing, **revoke** legalisation-related **finances for vulnerable** households.



Ensure authorities provide **utility connections** and **infrastructure works** during or immediately after the legalisation process.

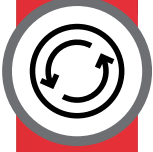


Exempt from covering costs of **demolition** of objects which could not be legalised.



Ensure the **objectives** of the Roma integration Strategies and Action Plans on housing are **reflected** in the legalisation process,

including the legalisation of entire traditional settlements and their upgrading to the minimum housing and urban standards, through participatory process involving inhabitants in the planning, decision and implementation. Use the existing promising practices of mapping and/or urban planning for such settlements and follow up with reconstruction, reconfiguration and legalisation of the settlements.



Where existing, **remove** mutually **conditioning legalisation** with full construction of the illegal building and vice versa.



Collect **data on housing**, including socio-economic situation and ethnic background **of** (potential) **applicants** for legalisation and assess the success rate of legalisation of **vulnerable groups**.



Where a mapping of informal settlements has not been performed, the legislation should **provide** clear but **realistic deadlines** for the municipalities to complete the comprehensive mapping exercise.



Social Housing

For many vulnerable Roma families social housing is the only opportunity to live in decent conditions

In the enlargement region there is also a need to widen the scope and beneficiaries of social services. To achieve this, the **sustainability** of the social housing systems and the **efficiency and effectiveness** of budgetary spending need to improve.

The economies in the Western Balkans have legislation on social housing at central level, regulating the issue to a different extent, in which Roma are generally not prioritised.

Long-term holistic approach to social housing is necessary in order to ensure **full integration, equality and sustainability** of the housing solution of the beneficiaries.

Recommendations

Strengthen the **link** between Roma integration **policies and public budgets** and use **programme budgeting** to promote the inter-institutional implementation of housing programmes.

Prioritise Roma in government **housing programmes** and ensure participation of the local community in the entire process.

Tackle the issue of **discrimination and prejudice** among the majority population in relation to social housing efforts targeting Roma.

Widen the scope, amount and adequacy of **social housing services**.





Increase the social **housing stock** by ensuring long-term diversified funding schemes, including through private-public partnerships and regulation of the rental market. Establish strong housing **fund** implemented by effective central and municipal bodies with sufficient expert capacities.



Improve central-local level (vertical) **coordination**, provide **capacity building** to municipalities to assume their responsibilities in housing, provide mandatory financial and technical **support** from central to municipal level to ensure full compliance with the law on social housing.



Collect sufficient information on the **needs of beneficiaries**, along with details on their socio-economic situation and ethnic background at municipal and central level.



Establish a strong **connection** between **legalisation, urban development** and **social housing policies**, including using social housing services of reconstruction support and assistance in purchasing construction land to facilitate legalisation.



Simplify the social housing application **procedures** for the beneficiaries, **ensure outreach** to those invisible to the social system, and **lower** administrative **barriers** to obtaining social housing. Introducing a **one-stopshop** for access to housing services may facilitate these efforts.



Waive the requirement of **proof of residence** as a formal condition for applying for participation in a social housing programme, in order to allow people without such documentation to be included.



Ensure social housing policies are **culturally adequate** for the beneficiaries, at the same time preventing the risk from social exclusion.



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