

# Equinet: Making Equality legislation Work for Roma and Travellers

EESC Hearing *Equal treatment, equality bodies  
and other possible means of redress for Roma*

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# Equinet Members

- Network of national **equality bodies**  
(46 members from 34 European countries)
- Equality bodies 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



# Equality body tools

- Mandated by EU to
  - “Provide independent assistance to victims”
  - “Conduct independent surveys”
  - “Publish independent reports and make recommendations”
- Promotional functions
- Quasi-judicial functions

# Making Equality Legislation Work for Roma and Travellers (2010)

- Most equality body mandates cover discrimination against Roma and Travellers
- Mutual education and awareness raising:
  - platforms for dialogue and networks (Greek Ombudsman/Hungarian Equal Treatment Authority)
  - awareness of rights among Roma community; cultural sensitivity (Swedish Ombud)
  - Targeted information about rights (former French HALDE)
  - Capacity building of NEB staff (former Irish Equality Authority)
- Strategic litigation (high expense)
  - Capture systemic or institutional discrimination
- Monitoring
  - Research on levels of rights awareness and barriers faced by the communities
- Promote Equality
  - Use positive action measures or equality duties (where these exist)



# Fighting Discrimination on the Ground of Race and Ethnic Origin (2016)

- In a context in which there is a prevalence and rise of
  - race discrimination
  - hate speech and hate crime
  - negative media coverage
  - negative political speech
  - negative public sentiment



# Fighting Discrimination (2016) Cont.

- **Roma in particularly vulnerable situation** compared to other racial or ethnic minorities (17/19 NEBs report)
- **Intersectional discrimination** (Roma women and children in education, early/forced marriage, employment, access to services)
- **Fields**
  - Healthcare and social protection
  - Housing
  - Goods and services (harassment, discrimination, denial of boarding)
  - Education (access, segregation)
  - **Employment** (recruitment, working conditions, equal pay, unjustified dismissal, harassment)



# Operational Platform for Roma Equality

- Platform stimulates cooperation among institutions, inter alia on
  - Access to justice and underreporting
  - Children's rights
  - Violence and early/forced marriage
  - Denial of boarding

# OPRE Joint Statement on Evictions



- Used by platform members
- Signatories urge governments and competent regional and local authorities to inter alia:
- Raise victims' awareness of their rights and provide information in a language victims speak
- Make available free or low cost legal assistance and effective legal remedies
- Ensure that evictions are not triggered or justified by anti-Gypsyism and hate speech;
- To address the systemic factors that prevent Roma and Travellers from legalising their housing status and put them at risk of eviction.





# Conclusions

- Keep closing gap between equality bodies and Roma and Traveller communities
  - Increase regional and local coverage of NEBs
  - Build capacity of NEBs (building trust based on mutual respect)
  - Ensure capacity for outreach activities (holistic and long term approach)
- Work with duty bearers (including politicians)
- Consider positive action measures
- All fields covered by Roma Integration Strategies equally important
- Ensure equality bodies are independent



**Thank you for your  
attention!**

**Any questions?**



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