



Relieving housing precarity amongst the Roma

Decent housing as a starting point for equality

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What is the ERGO Network?

- European umbrella organization of **32 national members** representing grassroots Roma communities across Europe, founded in 2008.
- *Objective:* to **combat poverty, inequality and antigypsyism** and to **strengthen Roma civil society** and participation in decision making at local, national and European level.
- Advocates for **better policies** on national and European level, organises public debates and campaigns, **builds the capacity of (pro-)Roma activists**, and provides spaces for networking and mutual learning.



Roma housing situation in Europe



One in three Roma (32%) live in households with a leaking roof, damp walls, or rot.



41% of Roma felt discriminated when looking for housing.



76% of Roma live in a neighbourhood where all or most residents are Roma.



78% of Roma live in overcrowded households.



Up to 10% of caravan dwellers and Roma were evicted at least once in the past five years in Belgium and France.



26% of Roma and Travellers live in housing with bad conditions.



Travellers in Ireland are especially affected by bad housing conditions such as leaking roofs, mould and damp walls.



One in five Roma (20%) live in dwellings that are too dark.



Relieving Roma housing precarity – Way forward:

❖ Housing security

- Access to land
- Establishing home ownership
- Formalise settlements (+utilities)
- Social housing



❖ Housing quality

- Health and safety standards (UN definition)
- Environmentally safe
- Energetically efficient / clean
- Public investment in all the above



Relieving Roma housing precarity – Way forward:

❖ Housing inclusiveness

- Curb antigypsyism on the housing market
- End spatial and residential segregation
- Anti-bias training for all housing actors
- Periodic review of housing and urban policy and practice

❖ Housing affordability

- Public loans and first-home schemes
- Capped rents
- Social housing
- Housing benefits



Relieving Roma housing precarity – Way forward:

❖ Forced evictions

- End unlawful evictions
- If not possible: alternative accommodation of sufficient quality, enough notice, legal support
- EU infringement proceedings

❖ Nomadic lifestyles

- Affirm and ensure this as a right
- Invest in quality infrastructure (halting sites)



Relieving Roma housing precarity – Way forward:

❖ Additional provisions

- Support with complex bureaucracy (language, literacy etc)
- Reduce the need for a fixed address
- Involve Roma communities and their NGOs
- Holistic approach – income, health, education, employment

Resources

- ERGO Network, [*Snapshot on Housing and Assistance for the Homeless*](#) (2021)
- [*Roma Strategy vs Reality: An Overview of Roma Homelessness and Housing Exclusion in Europe*](#), ERGO Network article for the FEANTSA Magazine (2020)
- ERGO Network research report on Roma access to quality and affordable housing in six countries (BG, CZ, HU, RO, SK, ES) – upcoming (November 2023)



Relieving Roma housing precarity – Best practices:

❖ Raslavice, Slovakia

- ✓ Piece of legislation allowing **public land to be sold inexpensively** with the purpose of solving unequal access to housing for populations like the Roma.
- ✓ Since 2010, mayors sold municipal land for **1 EUR per m²** to Roma families and created house parcels, where new houses are already being built.
- ✓ Construction of the new dwellings is possible through a **municipal firm which employs people from the community**.
- ✓ The municipality also **legalised more than 90% of lands** underneath the Roma settlement, allowing the owners of illegally built houses to start legalisations.
- ✓ Additionally, **the municipality is assisting Roma residents with the administrative processes** around legalizing houses or building new ones.

“We are helping each other. The mayor is helping us with the papers leading to building permits, but we are already building the houses ourselves and we do not need to pay for this to someone else”.

!!! Quality of housing improved, **segregation remains** – sold plots are only in the existing Roma settlement, mayor argued that there was no other suitable land.

Source: Roma Civil Monitor project, Slovakia report, 2019, available [here](#).



Relieving Roma housing precarity – Best practices:

❖ R-Home project

- ✓ **Reducing antigypsyism** in housing; **closing the gap** between Roma people and the rest of the population regarding **access to housing and utilities**.
- ✓ 2019-2022; **Italy, Romania, Hungary, France, Spain**; funded by the European Commission through its Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020).
- ✓ Results: [transnational study](#) on Roma housing; [booklet](#) with best practices and recommendations on Roma housing and empowerment; a number of [videos](#).
- ✓ More about the project: <https://rhome.caritasambrosiana.it/>

❖ Research studies, Bulgaria

- **Open Society European Policy Institute**, *Roma Evictions and Demolitions of Roma Houses: A Sustainable Solution for Roma Integration or a Problem of Roma Discrimination in Bulgaria?* (2017) – available [here](#).
- **World Bank**, *Challenges and Opportunities to Improve Housing in Marginalized Communities in Bulgaria: A Community Needs Assessment* – available [here](#).





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