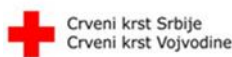




This project is funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union (2014-2020)



EVENT SUMMARY [ENG]



WITHIN, WITH and FOR Roma community

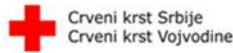
“Pro Health for Roma” as a model of multi-level support at the local level addressing discrimination and improving access to healthcare of the Roma national minority in Croatia and Serbia

Transnational round table „**WITHIN, WITH and FOR Roma community**“ held on Zoom platform on 30 March 2021 gathered in total 48 participants and marked a successful completion of the project **“PRO Health for Roma - Addressing discrimination and improving access to health care for ROMA communities (PRO Health for Roma)”**.

Funded by the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme of the European Union and co-funded by the Croatian Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs, the project “PRO Health for Roma” aimed to enhance Roma people’s access to healthcare services in the target areas of Međimurje County (Croatia) and Sremska Mitrovica (Serbia). With a duration of 17 months (November 2019–April 2021), it has been implemented by the following organisations/institutions from Croatia and Serbia: *Médecins du Monde Belgique (office in Croatia), Međimurje County (Croatia), City of Čakovec (Croatia), Institute of Public Health of the Međimurje County (Croatia), Red Cross Vojvodina (Serbia), Red Cross Sremska Mitrovica (Serbia), Regional Development Agency of Srem (Serbia) and Centre for Economic Development of Roma people (Serbia).*



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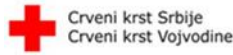
The transnational event brought together participants from Croatia, Serbia and other European Union countries to discuss lessons learned/best practices for improving Roma access to healthcare (at the local level) - based on the project results and findings. It was also the opportunity to draw recommendations for future actions at target locations, but also potential replication in other geographical areas. [The final publication](#) produced by the consortium partners was also presented during the event.

In their **welcome address**, *Michel Genet*, Executive director of Médecins du Monde-Belgique, *Marina Payerl-Pal*, Director of the Public Health Institute of Međimurje County and *Jelena Jovanović*, Provincial Deputy at Assembly of Roma of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina welcomed the participants, confirmed the impact of the project and insisted on the fact that COVID-19 pandemic, unfortunately, showed how ensuring global access to public healthcare is crucial and shall be an immediate priority - especially for the most vulnerable groups in society.

As an introduction, *Juliette Delescluse*, Office Coordinator in Croatia of Médecins du Monde-Belgique presented the project “PRO Health for Roma” and its key results. She first presented to participants both target regions where the project took place: Međimurje County and Sremska Mitrovica area. Both regions are rural areas with an important share of Roma population on their territories, a population that is settled and living in settlements apart or on the outskirts of local villages/cities. She then presented the different interventions levels of the project: fieldwork (outreach), empowerment/capacity-building actions, (transnational) information sharing, development of local policies/tools for Roma integration, enhancement of (intersectoral) coordination and conducting advocacy actions. She also went through key project results. In total, the project created an added value for 2985 members of the Roma national minority in Croatia and Serbia (mostly women: 60%). Regarding fieldwork, 6 Roma community workers hired with the medical team in the field (mobile units) conducted 1656 individual social/info-health prevention consultations and 80 info-health prevention workshops (for a total of 795 participants) as well as 279 individual mental health consultations and 40 mental health group sessions (for a total of 255 participants). An info guide „*I want to be healthy*” about health rights and services in both countries was also produced and disseminated (in Croatian, Serbian and English). Regarding empowerment/capacity building activities, 4 training sessions were organized for Roma community workers, 2 training sessions were held for a total of 58 health professionals along with an (online) study trip to Belgium. As a part of the fieldwork, data were collected and compiled into datasets and incorporated, among others, into local policy documents for Roma integration and final project publication. Regarding local policy level, the project permitted the development of (health) measures for Roma integration (local action plans) through a participatory process and related coordination meetings (4) as well as the development of “*Feasibility study for free transport services to health facilities for representatives of Roma national minority (and other vulnerable groups) in Međimurje county, Croatia*” (and related online map). Lastly, the project contributed to intersectoral coordination and (transnational) information sharing through 4 intersectoral meetings conducted at the local level, development of recommendations report ([final publication](#)) and conducting the final roundtable „*Within, With and For Roma community*”.



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The first panel of the event - “**Within** Roma community: outreach/fieldwork” - focused on the different aspects of fieldwork within the Roma community.

Tatjana Jovančević, Secretary of Red Cross Sremska Mitrovica presented in her presentation the composition of the field team (Roma community workers, nurse, general practitioners, health specialists, psychologists and social workers) and the fact that despite the diversity of the team, fieldwork was as close as possible to people in need. The team was thus mobile, adaptable and flexible - supporting persons in accessing healthcare and other related rights/services.

Dr. Diana Uvodić-Đurić, Specialist in School Medicine at Public Health institute Međimurje County and *Boris Boškalo*, Independent expert associate from Red Cross Vojvodina in their presentation first reflected on the concepts of health determinants and health literacy and the fact that a very low level of health literacy has been observed among Roma community. To counterbalance this, the project implemented 80 health info prevention workshops in both countries for 795 participants in total. They then explained that the format of the workshops was very important to reach as many participants as possible (interactive dimension, short duration, mobility/flexibility of the team to conduct them in different locations including open-air venues, time of workshop adapted to obligations of target population and feeling of welcoming/feeling at ease was shown towards participants).

Marijana Sabo, Mentor for Roma community workers for Médecins du Monde-Belgique made and live insight from Roma settlement Kuršanec with live testimonies of three project beneficiaries.

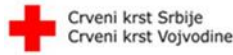
In her presentation, *Sunčica Lazanski*, a psychologist at Médecins du Monde-Belgique went through her experience as a mental health provider for Roma people in Međimurje County throughout the project (through individual consultations and group sessions) and more generally the global perspective of healthcare. Apart from the barriers in accessing mental healthcare, she listed the reasons why the Roma community is less willing to ask for mental health support such as cultural differences, gender role expectations but also structural problems such as stigma and prejudice, multiple experiences of rejection and lack of trust in the professionals. She then gave concrete examples of tools, the content of group sessions used during her work among the Roma community.

The second panel of the event - “**With** Roma community: experiences sharing and empowerment” - focused on the fact that the project was conducted with the Roma community and the constant efforts to empower their community.

In their presentation, *Slađana Teodorović*, a Roma community worker at the Centre for Economic Development of Roma people and *Violeta Kalanjoš*, a Roma community worker for Međimurje County shared their experience as Roma community workers on the project. As Roma women, they explained that even though they finished school, they are victims of multiple dimension discriminations. Apart from gaining exceptional work experience through the project by supporting members of their community as part of the multidisciplinary team, they also explained that they enhanced their skills/knowledge through capacity building activities of the project such as training for Roma community workers (and related handbook) as well as the (online) study visit to Belgium.



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Ljiljana Mihajlović, Director of the Office for Roma Inclusion at the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina then presented that project also contributed to reducing discrimination through conducting two training sessions for 58 health care professionals/health students covering topics such as the Socioeconomic status of Roma patients and Equality and human rights of Roma patients - with emphasis on the provision of healthcare services in an inclusive way.

The third and last panel of the event – “For Roma community: improving local framework, data collection and advocacy” focused on policy development and advocacy components of the project.

In their presentation, *Slobodan Veinović*, Senior Social Affairs Advisor at Town of Čakovec, *Maja Odrčić Mikulić*, Interim Head of Department for Civil Society, Human Rights and Sport at Međimurje County and *Zoran Radaković*, Project Manager at the Regional Development Agency of Srem presented both target regions, local policy framework/actions for Roma integration as well as the positive impact of the project on the development of policy document/tools especially useful for local authorities (such as (health) measures for Roma integration (local action plans) and “Feasibility study for free transport services to health facilities for representatives of Roma national minority (and other vulnerable groups) in Međimurje county, Croatia”).

Julie Cellier, the Project associate at Médecins du Monde-Belgique, presented key findings from the data collection process conducted through 3 questionnaires by the project team in the course of their fieldwork. Regarding healthcare renunciation, 26% of the project beneficiaries declared that, in the past 12 months, they did not contact the doctor although they required medical attention; and 34% reported having already been in a situation when insufficient financial resources stood in their way to pay for medicine or healthcare. Regarding health literacy, in case of medical issue, 79% of respondents in Serbia call emergency service or proceed to self-treatment (15%); in Croatia, 47% see a general practitioner and 40% call emergency services. Regarding the mental health status, 84% of respondents in Serbia and 38% in Croatia scored positive for currently experiencing a state of distress.

The last presentation of the event was delivered by *Juliette Delescluse*, Office Coordinator Croatia of Médecins du Monde-Belgique and *Jagoda Novak*, external expert for the project, presenting the project model outlines as well as identified lessons learned and recommendations for local/national/EU policymakers. All these elements are detailed in the [final project publication](#) presented at the event by the authors. “*Each person is seen as a human being, and this is the starting point and the purpose of this model*”, concluded Juliette Delescluse in her presentation.

All panels were followed by discussions and an exchange of views among participants.

A post-event survey conducted among participants concluded that the overall quality of the event was rated 5/5 by 88,89 % of the respondents.

Médecins du Monde and partners would like to thank once again all the participants for their interest and contribution throughout the event!

Project number	849124	Project Acronym	PRO HEALTH for ROMA
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