



Update on WHO activities for improving the health status of Roma in Europe



World Health Organization

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR Europe



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Всемирная организация здравоохранения

Европейское региональное бюро

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Presentation outline

1.

- **Background: unacceptable health inequities for the Roma in Europe**

2.

- **Response of the WHO Regional Office for Europe**

3.

- **Ongoing WHO activities in partnership with UN agencies and others**

Improving the health of Roma and other socially excluded populations is strongly emphasized in the new European policy framework for health and well-being (Health 2020)

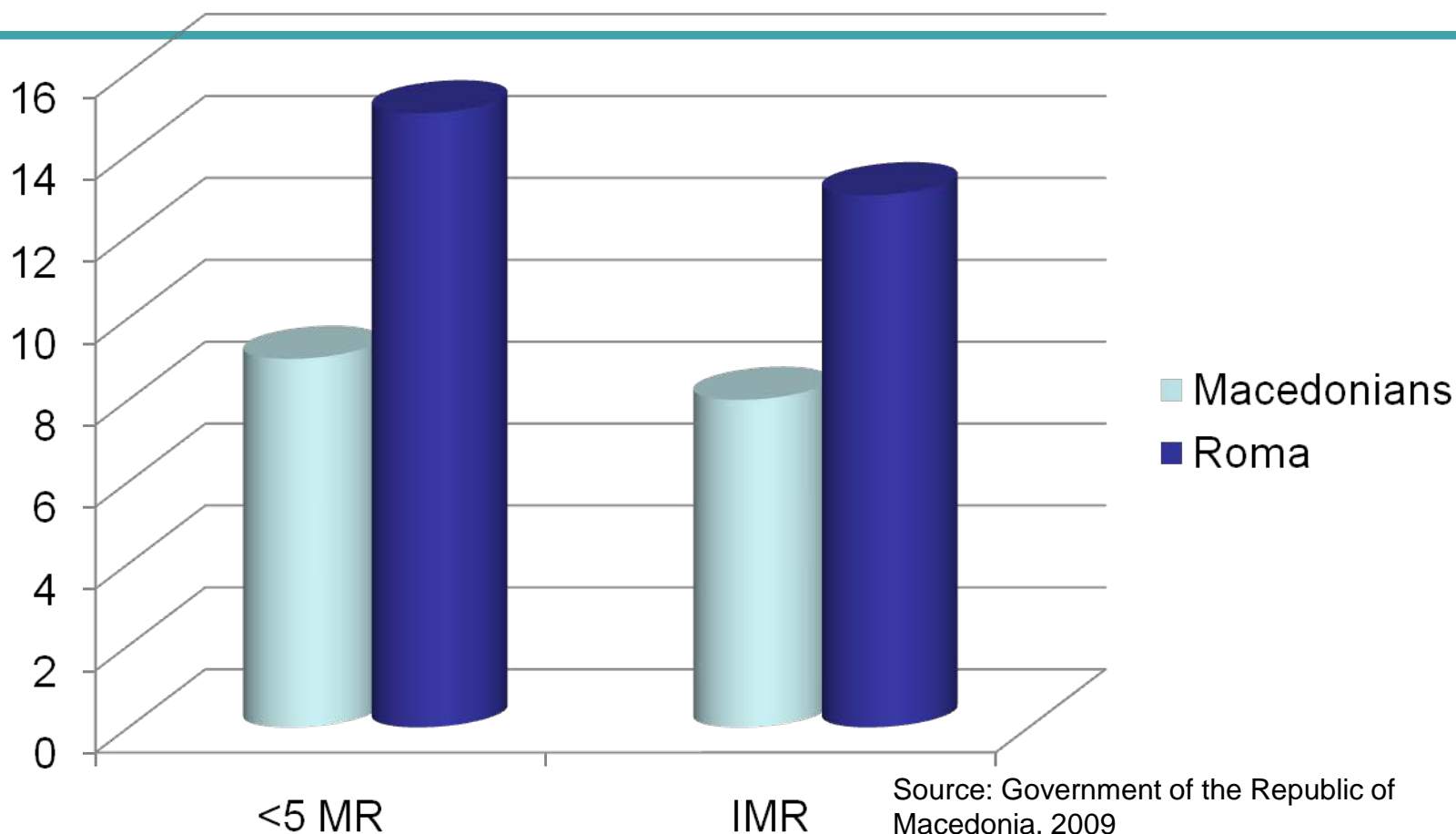
Health 2020 aim - To significantly improve health and well-being of populations, to reduce health inequities and to ensure sustainable people-centred health systems.



Inequities in progress – for the Roma

- While data is limited, existing data regarding antenatal care coverage, low birth weight, breastfeeding prevalence, maternal smoking, nutrition status, and vaccination rates reveal marked inequities between the Roma and the majority population, including (in some contexts) when Roma are compared to the poorest quintile of the majority population.

Under-five and infant mortality rate in TfYR of Macedonia in 2007



The root causes of health inequities

“Health inequities arise from the societal conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, referred to as social determinants of health”.

(Rio Political Declaration on Social Determinants of Health, 2012)



What good does it do to treat people's illnesses, and then send them back to the conditions that made them sick?

Sir Prof. Michael Marmot

Response of the WHO Regional Office for Europe

- Joining the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2011
- New programme on Vulnerability and Health
- Health situation of Roma highlighted in the new European policy framework for health and well-being (Health 2020)
- Establishing two WHO Collaborating Centres focussing on Roma health issues (Debrecen, Hungary and Alicante, Spain)
- Coordination of the interagency initiative “Scaling up actions towards MDG 4 and 5 in the context of the decade of Roma Inclusion and in support of National Roma Integration Strategies” (Key partners: WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, OHCHR, IOM and others)

WHO Multicountry Capacity Building and Resource Package

- **Multicountry capacity-building** events on reorienting strategies, programmes and activities related to MDGs 4 and 5 for greater Roma health equity (currently involving Bulgaria, Montenegro, TfTR of Macedonia and Serbia)
- **Development of resource package**, including “Tool-kit for ensuring the participation of Roma population in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes to improve their health”.



Reorientation of strategies, programmes and activities in 2012-2013

- **Bulgaria:** *National Programme on Sexual and Reproductive Health*
- **Montenegro:** *National strategy on protection and promotion of reproductive health*
- **TfYR Macedonia:** *Programme for active maternal and child health care*
- **Serbia:** *National program for screening on carcinoma cervicis*
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Multi-country training in Skopje, March 2013

Roma health electronic newsletter

- Published by WHO/Europe in cooperation with the European Commission – Directorate-General for Health and Consumers and the Interuniversity Institute of Social Development and Peace at the University of Alicante, Spain.
- It is produced as an output of the Interagency Coordination Initiative.
- Four issues have been published so far.
- Distribution database with over 600 e-mail addresses

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-publish/newsletters/roma-health-newsletter>

Example of upcoming WHO activities and products

- Multi-country trainings and publication of Roma health newsletters will continue in 2014-2015
- Publication of Roma participation tool-kit (2014)
- Launch of WHO Roma health website (2014)
- Creation of Roma health case study series (end of 2013) – first issue on Roma health mediation in Romania
- Organizing events on Roma health in partnership with other UN agencies: e.g. “Workshop on Strategies to Reduce Health Inequalities with Focus on Roma”, 24-25 October 2013, Istanbul, Turkey

Remaining challenges for implementing Roma integration strategies and action plans

- Gap between planning and implementation
- Little and inadequate use of existing economic resources
- Roma participation in all stages of policy development and implementation is still lacking
- Poor leadership and capacity
- Lack of institutional ownership
- Perverse effect of sectoralisation
- Little guidance and practical support
- Inability to convince public opinion

What can UN agencies do to help?

- Putting legal instruments to work
- Assisting in the improvement and implementation of the national strategies for Roma Inclusion
- Accumulating knowledge and awareness-raising
- Strengthening the work of National Human Rights Institutions and civil society on Roma Inclusion

What can UN agencies do to help?

- Focusing on strengthening the rights of Romani women and children
- Finding synergies between UN agency mandates and regional frameworks

Consistency between approaches developed by the UN and the Common Basic Principles of Roma Inclusion is important!



THANK YOU!

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