DASH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Bridging Policy and Practice

Towards Inclusive Housing Solutions for Roma in the Western Balkans

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The reality on the ground

Many Roma families live in housing that does not meet basic standards of adequacy.

Informal streets and settlements may remain unrecognised in planning systems.

Access to water, sanitation, electricity and public services is often limited.

Overcrowding, insecure tenure and spatial segregation reinforce exclusion.



Informal settlements: the human dimension



70%

POVERTY

Roma surveyed live in poverty

83%

OVERCROWDING

Live in overcrowded households

1 in 5

WATER ACCESS

Lack access to piped water

Source: FRA Roma Survey 2024 (published 2025); figures refer to surveyed populations.

Informal settlements in Serbia: scale of exclusion



~750

Informal settlements in Serbia

57

Informal settlements in Belgrade

Research question and analytical approach

What institutional factors explain the gap between Roma housing policy commitments and local implementation?

01

Method

Qualitative policy analysis and comparative case studies

02

Scope

Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo*

03

Focus

Local capacity, coordination, finance and participation

* All references to Kosovo are in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

From commitments to implementation

EU

EU Roma Framework

Adequate, desegregated housing and access to essential services

WB

Poznań Declaration

Settlement legalisation, infrastructure and local investment

RS

National strategies

Roma inclusion strategies and local action plans

The policy architecture exists. The critical test is whether commitments become coordinated, funded and measurable local action.

EU Roma Strategic Framework 2020–2030

EU

Equality & inclusion

Equal access to adequate, desegregated housing and essential services

2030

Measurable targets

Reduce housing deprivation and overcrowding gaps; improve access to tap water

LOCAL

Implementation

National strategies must translate into funded municipal action

Policy objective: Roma housing inclusion must be measurable, rights-based and locally delivered.

EU Anti-Poverty Strategy

2030

Poverty reduction

EU ambition: at least 15 million fewer people at risk of poverty or social exclusion

LINK

Integrated approach

Housing, employment, education, health and access to services reinforce one another

LOCAL

Place-based delivery

Coordinate social protection and neighbourhood investment at municipal level

Housing exclusion cannot be addressed separately from multidimensional poverty.

European Affordable Housing Plan

EU

Affordable housing

Expand access to affordable, quality and energy-efficient homes

CITY

Local capacity

Strengthen coordination across EU, national, regional and local authorities

INV

Investment readiness

Combine planning, technical assistance and financing for inclusive neighbourhoods

Opportunity: connect Roma settlement upgrading to broader affordable housing investment.

Why implementation falls short

1 Fragmented governance

Responsibilities divided across institutions

2 Municipal capacity

Limited planning and project preparation

3 Short-term finance

Pilot projects without continuity

4 Weak participation

Communities insufficiently involved

Poor practice: segregated container settlements



Temporary is not permanent

Container settlements can reinforce spatial segregation and prolong housing insecurity when used as long-term solutions.

What municipalities need to deliver

1 **Data & mapping**

Settlement-level diagnostics

2 **Legal readiness**

Tenure, land and planning

3 **Technical support**

Designs, costs and permits

4 **Long-term finance**

Multi-year investment pipeline

5 **Roma participation**

Co-design and accountability

Case study 1 · Raška, Serbia



PRE

BEFORE



POSLE

AFTER

Kučevski Lug

Housing intervention for 22 Roma families.

Combines housing improvement with local investment and external support.

Lesson: municipal ownership and sustained financing matter.

Photographs: original doctoral seminar presentation.

Case study 2 · Bijeljina, Bosnia and Herzegovina



Photograph: original doctoral seminar presentation.

Municipal leadership

Housing support connected with local government action.

Coordination between municipal authorities, partners and Roma households.

Lesson: local institutions must own the process.

Case study 3 · Fushë Kosovë, Kosovo*





ovezano
vanjem,
cijom.

* All references to Kosovo are in the context of UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

Images: original doctoral seminar presentation.

Settlement upgrading

Illustrates the potential of area-based approaches to informal settlements.

Urban planning, infrastructure and inclusive neighbourhood development must be connected.

Lesson: integrate physical upgrading and social inclusion.

What the three cases teach us

01

Raška

Combine housing interventions with municipal co-financing

02

Bijeljina

Build local ownership and institutional cooperation

03

Fushë Kosovë

Link settlement upgrading to inclusive urban planning

These are illustrative implementation pathways—not a quantitative ranking of programme outcomes.

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From isolated projects to investment-ready programmes

EU

EU / IPA III

Grant support and policy alignment

CEB

Development finance

Long-term social housing and infrastructure finance

UN

UN-Habitat

Planning, diagnostics and municipal technical assistance

A viable pipeline connects local needs, technical preparation, public financing and safeguards against segregation.

Recommendations for public policy

1

01 Secure tenure

Address legal and planning obstacles

2

02 Integrated upgrading

Housing + infrastructure + essential services

3

03 Empower municipalities

Stable funding and technical capacity

4

04 Meaningful participation

Roma communities in decisions and monitoring

Conclusion · The implementation gap

The central challenge is not writing another strategy. It is turning commitments into adequate homes and inclusive neighbourhoods.

Local capacity + coordinated investment + technical assistance + Roma participation

Thank you

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