

Roma exclusion: it's time for Member States to tackle this European "scandal" seriously

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The European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC) welcomes the new impetus given by the European Commission to the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies by submitting, together with its annual progress report, a proposal for an EU legal instrument for Roma inclusion: a Council recommendation to be voted by the Council of Ministers and adopted by Member States.

ERPC agrees with the European Commission that the National Roma Integration Strategies are far from making a positive change in Roma's daily lives, a European population suffering from high levels of discrimination and poverty.

Commissioners Reding and Andor emphasized at the EU Roma Platform the need to send a wake-up call to EU Member States and make them reiterate their commitment to stop excluding Roma from society. The proposal for a Council recommendation sends a strong message to national governments that strategies need to be properly implemented in order to make a positive difference on the ground and not only remain a commitment on paper.

The ERPC calls on the Commission and EU Member States to actively pursue anti-discrimination measures. "Member States have received bad marks particularly in the fight against discrimination. Countries like the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia are for instance singled out for continuing and pervasive school segregation. The assessment confirms the urgency of pressing Member States to immediately implement European anti-discrimination law in practice. Where necessary, the European Commission should trigger infringement procedures to ensure compliance", said Belén Sánchez-Rubio, ERPC Chair.

ERPC also welcomes the shift in the European Commission's approach, by involving more Roma and tackling empowerment during the EU Roma Platform. We now call for the introduction of indicators for genuine Roma participation and empowerment. In addition, a clear link has finally been made between social inclusion, discrimination, racism and Roma participation. However, a lot still needs to be done, especially at national and local levels.

"The situation of Roma is worsening in Europe, as they are increasingly affected by discrimination and racist attacks. So far, the EU Framework has not improved their socio-economic situation nor visibly decreased anti-Gypsyism. We therefore urge Member States to adopt the proposed Council recommendation and to clearly show their political will to serve all EU residents, including Roma on an equal basis", Sánchez-Rubio concluded.

Note to the editors: The European Roma Policy Coalition is an informal gathering of non-governmental organisations operating at EU level on issues of human rights, anti-discrimination, anti-racism, social inclusion, and Roma and Travellers' rights. Its members are Amnesty International, European Network Against Racism (ENAR), the European Roma Grassroots Organizations Network (ERGO), the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), the European Roma Information Office (ERIO), Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG), the Open Society Institute (OSI), Policy Center for Roma and Minorities, the Roma Education Fund.

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