

ERPC public statement on the EC Communication reporting on the implementation of the EU Framework for NRIS; and on the EU Summit

04 April 2014

The European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC) welcomes the European Commission's *Communication on the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration* as the first report examining the impact of European Union (EU) Member States' policy measures to foster the inclusion of Roma into their societies.

The ERPC agrees with the Commission that, regrettably, little tangible and sustainable impact has so far been achieved. Member States must demonstrate political will and determination to end discrimination and foster inclusion.

There is no and must not be place in the EU for discrimination. Member States must consistently meet their commitments and obligations to combat discrimination and ensure Roma inclusion.

We therefore turn towards the leaders of the EU and its Member States, who will come together at the European Roma summit, to demonstrate their consolidated political will to end discrimination; and to finally take effective actions to ensure inclusion.

1. Call on the leaders of the EU and Member States: Feel the urgency!

Over the last five years, we have seen progress in the development of strategies and policies to fight discrimination against Roma. Yet, with its *Communication on the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration*, the Commission has confirmed that there have been few tangible results.

This is in contrast to the **sense of urgency** felt by those who experience violence and forced evictions; those who are excluded from education and employment; and those who are subjected to discriminatory speech.

The ERPC echoes and multiplies the Commission's findings that strong and tangible political commitment has yet to be shown; and its call that this is urgently needed to effectively fight discrimination against Roma. Strategies and policies must be implemented, and discrimination challenged and addressed.

The ERPC calls on the leaders of the EU and Member States, decision-makers, officials and activists to join and support civil society's [pledge for Roma dignity](#) , and to integrate

this commitment into their daily work.

2. Reaction to the *Communication on the implementation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration*

The ERPC welcomes the Commission's critical approach in the Communication regarding the progress of Roma inclusion within Member States; and the fact that it highlights measures that remain outstanding. Nevertheless, the ERPC believes that the Communication has not provided a realistic picture of the current state (and lack) of Roma inclusion. Nor does it present a concrete analysis of the challenges to integration, and the roles which all relevant actors, including the Commission itself, should play.

The acknowledged lack of progress warrants a much stronger position by the Commission. More concrete proposals are needed to encourage Member States to comply with the objectives and commitments agreed to in the Council Recommendations on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States and in their National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS). And an efficient use of the EU financial instruments, notably the Structural and Investment Funds, must be ensured.

In particular:

I. The Communication is not setting a baseline as a reference for future progress reporting.

The Communication fails to explicitly describe major problems faced by Roma, including ethnic profiling, police abuse, hate crime and forced evictions. It also does not assess the current status of exclusion and the prevalence of discrimination. So far, the Commission has been reluctant to speak out on the specific situation of Roma in Member States, with the exception of the area of education. Without such a baseline, it will in the future prove difficult to assess whether measures have been effective or not.

The Commission has yet to develop targets, benchmarks and indicators against which the effects of the EU Framework for NRIS will be measured; and which must go beyond the indicators applied in the 2011 Fundamental Rights Agency's survey on the situation of Roma (which are not yet reflecting the many facets of social inclusion). Equally, Member States have yet to set clear and quantifiable objectives which would allow for impact assessment. This challenge also results from the lack of equality data, and robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Progress in the implementation of NRIS should be measured against comparable sets of disaggregated data in the light of measurable benchmarks (as required by the EU Framework). Member States must collect reliable data on the social and economic situation of Roma, and on discrimination on the grounds of ethnic origin, in full respect of data protection standards (including the anonymised processing of data).

In its progress assessment, the Commission should also give wider visibility to

contributions that have been made to meet those targets set in the broader EU policy framework, notably the Europe 2020 Strategy.

II. The analysis remains superficial and therefore often patchy.

The analysis of major problems of exclusion within the focus areas of the EU Framework is mostly limited to a few sentences, sometimes to a paragraph. As a result, no conclusions can be drawn on the root causes of the problem (e.g. lack of political will, lack of funding, lack of capacity, lack of cooperation between various stakeholders, etc). In addition, the extent to which Roma are discriminated against and excluded is inadequately covered in the Communication. Important aspects such as racist violence and access to remedial justice are excluded from the text. Significant facets of exclusion, such as forced evictions, are not depicted at all.

III. Concrete recommendations are needed.

The ERPC welcomes the fact that the Commission has taken a more practical approach in the Communication, looking into how Member States actually implement their strategies. The Commission has, albeit somewhat cautiously, started to provide Member States with concrete recommendations and priorities (e.g. for education). The ERPC however believes that the Commission must be stronger and more explicit, and should agree on concrete targets with and for Member States (for example with regard to ending segregation in housing, access to social housing, and health care).

IV. There is no assessment of the institutional set up for the implementation of the NRIS.

As the institutional mechanisms and structures dedicated to the implementation of the NRIS have in many cases been newly established, the Communication would have provided an opportune framework to assess their efficiency. In future, the Commission should reflect on the efficiency of the National Roma Contact Points with regard to their coordination and implementation work at both national and EU levels.

V. Further reflection on the root-causes of discrimination is needed.

The ERPC welcomes the Commission's comments on the efficiency of Member States' anti-discrimination measures. It supports the Commission's call for stronger political leadership when it comes to fighting discrimination effectively and to prevent racism.

The extent to which anti-Gypsyism/anti-Roma racism is deeply rooted and pervasive in Europe is overlooked in the text. This should be highlighted as one of the main causes for the lack of change in attitudes and remedial policies across Member States.

VI. The Commission is quiet about its role in holding Member States accountable.

The ERPC welcomes the fact that the Commission reiterates its role in "making sure that the path [to achieve the expected results] is consequently followed further". The Commission does not however elaborate on how it will fulfil its role of "guardian of the EU treaties", nor how it will ensure compliance with the existing EU legislation to

promote equal treatment and non-discrimination, notably the Race Equality Directive and the Framework Decision on Combating Racism and Xenophobia.

Despite naming Member States in which segregation in schools should be eliminated “systematically”, the Commission has not yet formally engaged with these Member States to do so (infringement procedure), despite the clear mandate of the Race Equality Directive.

The ERPC reminds the Commission of its fundamental role to protect citizens and residents from rights violations; and that it cannot fulfil this role by merely ‘encouraging’ Member States to carry out inclusion measures in the frame of NRIS. The Commission must take a clear stance, in words and through action that discrimination cannot and will not be tolerated within the EU. It must finally make use of the infringement procedure to address systematic discrimination.

VII. Absorption of funding.

A more critical assessment of the existing challenges for a full and effective use of Structural and Investment Funds for Roma inclusion and how to overcome these in the next programming period would have been welcomed. The Commission should take a tougher stance and firmly request that Member States make the most of the opportunities presented by the main political and financial instruments at their disposal, in order to promote the socio-economic integration of Roma.

VIII. Address the urgency!

Long-term policies are crucial to end the deeply entrenched discrimination and racism against Roma and their systematic exclusion from society. Existing policies do not respond to the urgency felt by those affected from exclusion and discrimination. Hate crimes, discriminatory speeches, forced evictions, and exclusion from education, housing, health and employment are affecting Roma every day. These often result from anti-Gypsyism/anti-Roma racism. The Commission and Member States must reflect this urgency in their response to end discrimination and exclusion, without neglecting the need for long-term policies.

