Preliminary suggestions from the ERPC to reform the European Roma Platform

I. Introduction

The European Commission is considering a review of the European Roma Platform with the objective to strengthen the Platform. We would very much welcome such a reform. In its current form, the European Roma Platform does not reach its objectives to ensure exchange of expertise, provide support and facilitate cooperation between all concerned parties in a meaningful way.

The need for a formal consultation

The Platform is intended to be a participatory forum. Yet, in the past, civil society has tended to be excluded from agenda setting. In addition there was little space for meaningful contribution to policy making or monitoring. The reform of the Platform must address these deficiencies. As a first step, the reform itself should be participatory: a transparent, inclusive and open **formal** consultation should be conducted allowing all stakeholders to indicate their expectations of the Platform. This will contribute for the Platform to be seen as a legitimate forum by civil society and relevant stakeholders.

The suggestions we are making below aim at feeding into an initial reflection on the reform of the Platform, but **they should not be considered as a substitute for a more comprehensive form of consultation with all relevant stakeholders**.

Building on past experiences

It is crucial that the Platform's reform will build on previous agreements and discussions about its role, in particular the Spanish "Integrated European Platform for Roma Inclusion Road Map" (30 June 2010). The reform should consider proposals such as the Finnish Non-Paper on "Roma Issues in the European Union" (1 February 2011) and draw from experiences and lessons learnt from other processes such as the Decade of Roma Inclusion.

Objectives of the Platform

The Platform's primary aim should be to contribute to the successful implementation of the EU Roma Framework, to EU policy developments that might affect Roma (including migration, fundamental rights, or citizenship policies), and more broadly, to countering discrimination and negative sentiment against Roma.

It should do so by:

- Facilitating support to effective implementation
  a. Exchange of good practice
  b. Promotion of the cooperation between all parties and coordination between the Member States

- Providing **pertinent and concrete input** for the relevant policy making (National Reform Programmes, National Roma Integration Strategies, EU policy frameworks, EU funding regulations, etc.)
  a. through continuous analysis of needs, instruments and impacts
  b. involving Roma people and organisations, experts, local authorities and other stakeholders
  c. ensuring that results and outcomes are channelled to relevant authorities and other stakeholders.

- Contributing to the Commission's monitoring of the social inclusion and fundamental rights of Roma
  a. By providing input to the monitoring of the implementation of national strategies and set of policy measures
  b. By providing input to the monitoring of the impact of national and regional interventions
  c. Involving various stakeholders, in particular Roma people and organisations

- Ensuring a meaningful and continuous dialogue between Roma people and organisations, civil society, local authorities, Member States, relevant international organisations and European institutions.

II.   Possible structure and working method

The Platform should be organised and structured in a manner that facilitates the achievement of its objectives. The following suggestions are aimed to initiate a discussion on a possible structure for the Platform.

1.   The **EU Roma Platform** establishes links to – but operates separately from – the Europe 2020 governance mechanism, the Social OMC (and the work of the Social Protection Committee), the Poverty Platform, and other relevant governance mechanisms and policy forums.

2.   The Platform's work is organised around an **annual plenary meeting**, and **working groups** which meet regularly during the year and prepare input for the plenary.

3.   **Participants** comprise Member State representatives, the European Commission, civil society, experts and academics, international organisations and other stakeholders.

4.   A **steering group** representing member states, civil society and other key stakeholders defines the agenda, content and working methods of the Platform.

5.   A **permanent support structure (secretariat)** is provided by the European Commission. It supports the work of the steering group and ensures the Platform's preparation, operation and follow-up, with involvement of all relevant DGs at sufficient level of seniority to provide coordination and to ensure the Platform's results feed into policy making.

6.   **The working groups** include relevant stakeholders, such as the European Commission, Member States, civil society, experts (FRA, CoE, academics, EURoma Network, etc) and other stakeholders (WB, UNDP, etc.). Working group activities proceed according to a jointly established work plan based on the 10 Common Basic Principles and taking into account the key intervention areas of the EU Roma Framework. The Working Groups' objective is providing input for the plenary to enable the later to adopt recommendations for the implementing authorities, the Member States and the European institutions. Working groups are supported by the secretariat and will define their activities on an annual basis.

7.   The Platform **plenary meetings** are open to a wide range of stakeholders. Attendance from high level representatives from Member States ensures commitment to the outputs of the Platform. Plenary meetings provide room for open exchanges on the working group outcomes.

8.   The steering group, in close coordination with the trio Presidency **synchronises the Platform's activities** with the European agenda (NRP reviews, European Semester, Social OMC, Community actions, Stockholm programme, etc.) so that its output can feed into relevant policy processes, in accordance with chapters 3, 4 and 5 of the Platform roadmap.

9. The **timing and organisation** of the Platform allows it to fit within the EU's agenda and to contribute to key events and processes (Councils, High-level meetings...). The Platform's plenary meeting **should take place** *before* the European Commission assesses the implementation by the Member States of the national strategies requested in the Framework. By doing so, the Platform will assure its contribution to the robust monitoring system envisaged by the Framework.

10. The European **Commission annually reports** to the plenary on the progress of the implementation of the Platform's recommendations and results.

11. **Through outreach activities,** the European Commission and Member States promote the work of the Platform to national and local stakeholders and simultaneously invite national and local input to the activities of the Platform (e.g. Member States national contact points for Roma Integration Strategies facilitate national Roma platforms).