

International Roma Day, 8 April

Time for the EU and Member States to finally assume their responsibility to achieve equal rights for Roma

(Brussels, 8 April 2013)

“The European Union must make fundamental changes to its policies, including funding policies, to allow Roma to fully access their rights”, according to the European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC), a coalition of NGO at European level.

On International Roma Day, the ERPC urges the EU and its member states to take full leadership on Roma inclusion and to ensure real changes for Roma by fully implementing the National Roma Integration Strategies and effectively enforcing EU anti-discrimination law, with the aim to improve their living conditions, guarantee Roma people’s human rights and fight discrimination.

“Roma in Europe have continued to face widespread discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion in all areas of life over the last two decades, despite investment by the European Union and the adoption of the EU Race Equality Directive that bans racial and ethnic-based discrimination”, said the ERPC chair. *“The growing gap between Roma and other citizens in Europe can only be filled if well-intended policies which provide genuine opportunities for Roma to access their rights to education, employment, housing and healthcare and specify tangible measures to combat discrimination, are adopted and fully implemented”,* added.

In particular, the ERPC calls for the European Union to:

1. Ensure that the rights and principles of non-discrimination, equality, solidarity and respect for human dignity, as enshrined in the EU treaties, are the cement of all policies aimed at the inclusion and promotion of Roma and other vulnerable groups.
2. Guarantee the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies which were submitted by member states last year, and encourage member states to adopt, review and implement strategies that include strong measures to combat

discrimination in all areas of life, particularly housing, education, employment and healthcare.

3. Ensure that EU anti-discrimination law, namely the Race Equality Directive, is effectively implemented in member states. The EU has the powers to penalize member states which fail to comply with EU law, including by initiating infringement procedures. It is time for the Commission to use all the tools at its disposal to address discrimination and other human rights violations that Roma people face in Europe.
4. Adopt a zero tolerance policy towards racist discourses and practices in Europe.
5. Promote the active engagement and participation of Roma civil society in all decisions affecting them by providing them adequate consultative, implementation and monitor opportunities for. This includes the revision of the mandate and functioning of the EU Roma Platform.
6. Strengthen activities with Roma in the accession countries in the framework of a rights-based approach and to ensure that they adhere to the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.

“The European Commission and Member States must take action now and live up to their commitments, if they are not to fail more than 10 million Roma who deserve the same opportunities as everyone else”, concluded the ERPC chair.

Note to 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.

For further comment/background and interviews, contact:-

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