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FONDACION SECRETARIADO GITANO

# EU ROMA POLICY COALITION



## **Declaration on the expectations from the II European Roma Summit in Cordoba, 8-9 April 2010**

The Second EU Roma Summit is an important and rare opportunity for EU institutions and governments, the enlargement countries, Roma representatives and civil society to jointly address the social exclusion and discrimination suffered by the Roma. The Summit will be organised by the Spanish Presidency on 8-9 April 2010 in Cordoba, Spain.

The European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC) hereby expresses its aims and expectations for a successful summit.

### I.

The European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC) is seriously concerned about the discrimination suffered by the Roma in education (particularly segregation), housing (particularly forced evictions and sub-standard living conditions), employment (particularly low employment rate) and health care system (coercive sterilization and lack of adequate coverage). The recent rise of anti-Gypsyism (Romaphobia) across several EU member-states through regular hate speech, anti-Romani attacks and killings should be condemned by all European societies, and the perpetrators brought to justice. Therefore, the ERPC calls on the Spanish Presidency, EU member states, enlargement countries and the European Commission to show strong political commitment to make full use of available Community and legal instruments to end all forms of discrimination against the Roma.

### II.

The Summit should avoid a declarative character and focus on strategic policy commitments, which show political will to close the gap between the Roma and the majority societies. Welcoming the approach taken by the Spanish Presidency, the ERPC encourages the organizer of the Summit and the EU to define a clear political follow-up to the Summit conclusions, in order to avoid the mistakes of the First European Roma Summit where neither political conclusions nor concrete proposals were adopted. The ERPC calls on the Spanish

Presidency to incorporate the conclusions of the Second Roma Summit in consequent Council Conclusions, giving clear guidance for Community action.

### III.

The European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC) encourages the new European Commissioners to prioritise the Roma issues covered by their portfolios. The ERPC urges the Commission to establish an effective system of coordination between Commissioners and between Directorates-General as a priority to tackle Roma issues at EU level. Only a successfully coordinated approach will prove that a multi-sectoral approach to Roma issues will bring success and results.

### IV.

Active involvement of Roma representatives and civil society in the preparation of the Summit, which was unfortunately lacking in the run up and during the First Roma Summit, is a key to successful Summit. The ERPC extends an invitation to the Spanish Presidency and European Commission to listen to the concerns and demands from Roma representatives and civil society during the consultation meeting in Brussels and to convene a further consultation meeting before the Summit.

### V.

The ERPC is willing to contribute its expertise towards the development of policies that produce real progress and visible results. The European Roma Platform has not been able to match the will and knowledge of the Roma representatives and civil society organisations with the engagement of the EU institutions. The Platform has so far been characterized by a top-down approach and a lack of substance and strategic orientation. Both mandate and working methods of the Platform are unclear, while serious involvement of Roma and civil society is missing. The ERPC welcomes the Spanish Presidency objective to delineate a medium-term agenda for the Platform based on the Ten Common Basic Principles and calls upon the Presidency to ensure that civil society is actively involved in its formulation.

### VI.

The European Roma Summit in Cordoba should provide an opportunity to highlight good practice, promote innovative approaches and coordinate current initiatives to best effect. The Summit should produce a pathway to participation: active, substantive and proportionate participation by Roma in the formulation, development and implementation of policies that directly impact on Roma communities. The quality of EU and national policies depends upon ensuring wide participation throughout the policy chain. The ERPC urges the Spanish Presidency, European Commission, European Council, European Parliament and

national governments to mobilise human resources by drawing upon Roma expertise, sustaining meaningful dialogue with civil society, and devising appropriate broader forms of consultation with Roma communities to ensure the quality and impact of Roma-related policies.

## VII.

The ERPC believes that the European Commission should not start with introducing new working methodology of “pathways” that would only complicate the existing approaches. Instead ERPC would like to assist EU and European Commission to prepare an Action Plan for the creation of comprehensive and coherent EU Roma Policy based on the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015, the OSCE Action Plan, and the recommendations of the Council of Europe, the United Nations and the European Parliament.

## VIII.

The European structural and pre-accession funds offer considerable opportunities to promote Roma inclusion in Europe. The low absorption of those funds by the EU Member States and local authorities has a direct impact on the socio-economic situation of Roma, while there is limited and unsatisfactory monitoring of projects that are being focused on Roma integration. The ERPC recommends that the EU prioritize Roma in all relevant funding programmes and propose to Member States criteria for funding allocation, as a way to measure real progress and impact on Roma inclusion efforts and build on positive examples while maintaining transparency.