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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL, THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

The social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe

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The social and economic integration of the Roma

1. CONTEXT

The EU and its Member States have a special responsibility towards the Roma, who live in all Member States, candidate countries and potential candidates. The Charter of Fundamental Rights sets out the values on which the EU is based. These values need to be translated into practice in order to improve the situation of the Roma people, who form the largest ethnic minority in the EU.

Roma inclusion is in line too with the Inclusive Growth priority of the EU 2020 strategy and especially its Flagship Initiative of a European Platform against Poverty. The full integration of Roma will have important economic benefits for our societies, especially for those countries with a shrinking population which cannot afford to exclude a large part of their potential labour force.

Yet a significant part of the 10-12 million Roma in Europe live in extreme marginalisation in both rural and urban areas and in very poor socio-economic conditions. The discrimination, social exclusion and segregation which Roma face are mutually reinforcing. They face limited access to high quality education, difficulties in integration into the labour market, correspondingly low income levels, and poor health which in turn results in higher mortality rates and lower life expectancy compared with non-Roma. Roma exclusion entails not only significant human suffering but also significant direct costs for public budgets as well as indirect costs through losses in productivity.

The complexity and interdependence of the problems calls for sustainable responses which tackle all aspects of Roma deprivation through an integrated approach. Low educational attainment, labour market barriers, segregation in housing and other areas, and poor health outcomes need to be addressed simultaneously.

Since December 2007, in a series of Council conclusions, the EU has endorsed the Commission's assessment that there is a powerful EU framework of legislative, financial and policy coordination tools already available to support Roma inclusion, but that more can be done to make them work more effectively.¹ The Council affirmed that it is a joint responsibility of the Member States and the European Union to address the challenge of Roma inclusion, within the scope of their respective and complementary competences, and

¹ Pursuant to the Communication 'Non-discrimination and equal opportunities: A renewed commitment', COM(2008)420.

has firmly embedded Roma inclusion into EU policy making.² The current Trio Presidency has identified the social and economic integration of the Roma as one of their priorities.³

Measures to overcome Roma exclusion need to be set within the wider framework of European equality, inclusion, and growth policies and to optimise the use of the legal and financial instruments available also to mainstream society. The overall objective is an inclusive society, not a new form of ethnic segregation: any progress which can be achieved in the area of Roma inclusion represents progress too in the inclusion of all ethnic minorities in the EU and vice-versa.

The aim of this Communication, ahead of the 2nd Roma Summit, is to indicate how the European Union will develop its contribution to the full social and economic integration of the Roma, on the basis of the progress achieved.

2. PROGRESS ACHIEVED

Since 2008 progress has been made in the Member States and at EU level, as the accompanying report demonstrates⁴. The focus shifted in the EU in 2009 from an analysis of the problems to an exploration of how existing instruments could be made more effective and how the situation of the Roma could be addressed more explicitly across a broad range of policies, including employment, social inclusion, health, education, housing, youth and culture.

The enforcement and further development of EU legislation in the areas of non-discrimination, freedom of movement, data protection and anti-racism has continued. The Commission also monitored the transposition of the relevant *acquis* in candidate countries and potential candidates. This was complemented by including a specific Roma perspective in the work of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, the network of specialised Equality Bodies (EQUINET), training for legal practitioners and the European Commission's 'For Diversity — Against Discrimination' information campaign.

The European Platform for Roma inclusion — composed of key players in Roma inclusion from EU institutions, international organisations, Member States governments and civil society — was launched in April 2009 to exchange good practice and experience and to stimulate cooperation among its participants. Its objective is to increase the coherence and effectiveness of the parallel policy processes at national, European and international level with a view to creating synergies. The Common Basic Principles for Roma inclusion, drawn up under the Platform process and distilled from the experiences of successful Roma inclusion initiatives, provides a practical framework for public policy makers at all levels on how to design and implement successful initiatives.⁵

For example, the second of the ten Principles was used to justify the Commission proposal in 2009 to modify the European Regional Development Fund Regulation. The aim is to benefit extremely marginalised communities – explicitly but not exclusively addressing Roma

² European Councils: Council documents 16616/1/07 and 11018/1/08 REV1; General Affairs Council: Council document 15976/1/08 REV 1, Employment, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Affairs Council: Council documents 9721/2/09 REV2 and 10394/09.

³ Council document 16771/09

⁴ SEC(2010) 400.

⁵ Council Document 10394/09, annex.

communities – in the 27 EU Member States by co-funding interventions, together with the European Social Fund, in new and renovated housing in urban and rural areas, as part of an integrated approach that includes education, employment, social care, and healthcare actions.

Most Member States report a stronger focus on internal coordination and on involving the Roma communities. Some Member States have begun to use the opportunities of complex programming and combined cohesion policy instruments.

Member States report that they want to mainstream Roma issues and to use mutual learning and of peer reviews to explore how to improve their initiatives on desegregation and on access to education, employment and basic social services. A forum for such exchanges is the European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds (EURoma), which aims at exchanging information and experience, sharing strategies and approaches and generating knowledge.

The forthcoming report of a study for the Commission in 2009 and 2010 on ‘Activities to improve the impact of policies, programmes and projects aimed at the social inclusion and non-discrimination of Roma people in the EU’ will identify success factors and good practice.

Many of these actions have been supported by the EU Structural Funds, and in particular the ESF⁶. In line with the conclusions of the December 2008 General Affairs Council and the March 2009 Resolution of the European Parliament, the Commission increased its efforts to harness the full potential of these instruments. In particular, the Commission has engaged bilaterally with Member States’ governments to support them in making greater use of the EU Structural Funds to support Roma inclusion. Moreover, the effectiveness of the ESF has been enhanced by stepping up the monitoring and evaluation of Roma projects and disseminating throughout Europe those measures which were found to be particularly effective.

The European Commission is also implementing a pilot project on Roma inclusion (€ 5 million 2010-2012), initiated by the European Parliament, addressing early childhood education, self-employment through micro-credit, and public awareness particularly in countries with high Roma populations. The pilot project will also explore methods for data collection and counterfactual evaluation to assess the impact of the interventions in these three fields.

3. CHALLENGES AHEAD

The earlier analysis of the EU instruments and policies⁷ and the progress report 2008-2010⁸ confirm that these instruments and policies are generally apt to support Roma inclusion, even on a large scale. The issue is how to ensure their potential is realised.

Several European and international players are currently pursuing parallel policy processes aimed at including Roma. Among them are the EU policies relevant for Roma inclusion, the OSCE Action Plan on the participation of Roma and Sinti in public and political life (adopted in 2003 and signed by 55 States),⁹ the Council of Europe’s Recommendations and

⁶ European Social Fund (ESF) and European Fund for Regional Development (ERDF)

⁷ SEC(2008)2172.

⁸ SEC(2010)400.

⁹ OSCE Decision no. 3/30, Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area (MC.DEC/3/03).

Resolutions of the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly,¹⁰ and the national action plans adopted and implemented by the 12 countries participating in the Decade for Roma Inclusion 2005-2015.¹¹ The outcomes of these activities vary, depending on their legal bases, the instruments, the resources and the stakeholder involvement. Moreover, they are only loosely coordinated through the Informal Contact Group of International Organisations on Roma, Sinti and Travellers.¹²

The challenges ahead include:

- Improved cooperation between European, national and international players and representatives of the Roma communities, building on the commitment to Roma inclusion that has materialised in the last 5-10 years;
- A translation of this commitment and cooperation into positive changes at the local level. This needs to be complemented by improved ownership and a strengthened capacity on the part of local administrations, civil society and the Roma themselves to initiate and implement projects, programmes and policies;
- More effective communication of the benefits of Roma inclusion for local and national economic and social development.¹³ The social and economic integration of Roma is a 2-way process which requires a change of mindsets of the majority as well as of members of the Roma communities and their leaders;
- The promotion of the integrated use of EU Funds in order to tackle the multi-dimensional challenges of Roma exclusion;
- The development of explicit desegregation policies, notably in education and in housing and supported by the Structural Funds;
- Achieving a special focus on the most disadvantaged micro-regions;
- Mainstreaming Roma inclusion issues into the broad policy areas of education, employment, public health, infrastructure and urban planning, and economic and territorial development, rather than treating it as a separate policy. Good practices and successful models from projects need to be better disseminated and to become an integral part of policy.

¹⁰ In particular: Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers 2006/10 (access to health care); 2005/4 (housing conditions); 2004/14 (movement and encampment of Travellers); 2001/17 (economic and employment situation); 2000/4 (education of Roma/Gypsy children); 1983/1 (stateless nomads and nomads of undetermined nationality); 1975/13 (social situation of nomads);

¹¹ http://www.romadecade.org/decade_action_plans.

¹² The Informal Contact Group (ICG) is co-organised by the Presidency of the Council and the Council of Europe. It comprises representatives of the EU institutions, international organisations and multilateral initiatives (UN organisations, World Bank, OSCE, Decade for Roma inclusion 2005-2015), Member States (represented by the former, current and future Presidency), as well as civil society. The ICG is a forum for mutual information about ongoing activities within the remit of the participating organisations.

¹³ The Commission uses the key message 'Roma in Europe: Support inclusion for everyone's benefit' for specific print and audiovisual materials.

Accordingly, the Commission, Member States and other key players need to concentrate their efforts on meeting these challenges by enhancing the effectiveness of policies in terms of both content and process.

3.1. Policy Measures for Effective Roma Inclusion

3.1.1. Financial instruments

The EU Structural Funds and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) as well as the Instrument for pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) represent nearly half of the annual budget of the European Union and are important levers for change.

Information on the implementation of these instruments shows that, generally speaking, there is no lack of available funds to underpin promising policies and programmes. There are, however, a number of obstacles which prevent some Member States from using them for actions targeted at Roma inclusion which comprise shortcomings in planning and programming as well as administrative burden. As successful examples now demonstrate, integrated Roma strategies which address the complexity of the problems that underly the marginalisation of Roma communities are much more effective than isolated projects which address only one or two issues. Obstacles also include reticence at the local level and a lack of political awareness and capacity among local administrations, as well as among Roma communities. These difficulties can be tackled by incentives or by the provision of appropriate support and expertise, including through technical assistance under the EU Structural Funds. The Commission welcomes NGO initiatives in support of capacity building (e.g. the OSI initiative "Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma"). Moreover, Roma empowerment and in particular participation in the decision-making process by Roma women, who act as a link between the family and society, have proved to be an important factor for the success of any measure.

To support Member States to implement policies with a visible impact on the ground, in 2009 the Commission began a series of High Level bilateral events in the Member States to bring together political decision makers and the highest level of administrations and stakeholders at both European and national levels along with representatives of Roma communities. These events prepare the ground for agreeing targets for a greater use of EU Funds for Roma inclusion by setting specific and established milestones.

The Commission has encouraged larger-scale integrated programming which combines actions under several Operational Programmes in support of interventions which take an inter-sectoral approach to tackling the problems of Roma communities. It welcomes initiatives by Member States to make desegregation measures a condition of access to Structural Funding and considers this is fully in line with the requirement to avoid any discrimination in the implementation of the Funds.¹⁴

The Commission also encourages Member States to involve the Roma community in planning the use of the Funds through the practical implementation of the partnership principle, so as to involve Roma at every stage of the process from programme design to evaluation, as well as to support capacity building within Roma civil society and within local administrations. It welcomes too efforts to simplify application procedures and the more systematic provision of pre-financing to successful applicants.

¹⁴ Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 notably Article 16

3.1.2. *An integrated approach alongside mainstreaming*

Although the living conditions of many Roma communities are characterised by multiple, mutually reinforcing problems, measures to address these problems are too often disconnected from general policies on education, employment, public health or urban rehabilitation. There is still a tendency to focus on single-strand solutions, such as the promotion of Roma employment or the refurbishment of Roma settlements, implemented through short-term projects and programmes which are not sustainable.

As underlined by the European Economic and Social Committee in 2008,¹⁵ the mainstreaming of Roma issues into all relevant European and national policies is the most promising way to achieve inclusion. The joint work on health inequalities under the Social Protection and Social Inclusion strategy and the EU Health Strategy is a specific example of such an approach.¹⁶ In 2009, the Commission put specific focus on Roma in the context of the Lisbon Strategy. National performance levels and policy responses concerning the inclusion of Roma in the labour market were analysed on the basis of National Reform Programmes in the Member States and fed into the Joint Employment Report 2008/2009. Mainstreaming does not invalidate the promotion of integrated and tailor-made approaches that take the specific situation of Roma communities in the Member States into consideration.

The increasing exchanges of experience among national administrations about successful Roma-targeted programmes can be developed through the participation of Member States in the European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds (EURoma). An academic network on Roma studies, supported by the Commission and the Council of Europe, will improve the evidence base for Roma initiatives and create a stronger bridge with policy.

The structured cooperation of Member States in the existing Open Methods of Coordination is of utmost importance in the central areas of education, employment and social inclusion to mainstream Roma issues into national policies. As the facilitator of the exchange of experience and good practices, the Commission can influence this process.

Making policy measures more effective

The Commission will:

- continue organising high-level bilateral events in the Member States and to follow up subsequent developments. It will take stock of the results of these visits by the end of 2013.
- urge Member States to take action to ensure that interventions financed by Structural Funds promote equal opportunities and tackle segregation;
- encourage Member States to use the EURoma network to exchange best practices;
- support a network on Roma studies to better link research and policy;

¹⁵ Exploratory Opinion, The Integration of Ethnic Minorities/Roma, SOC(263), EESC 1207/2008, paragraph 5.3.

¹⁶ Communication 'Solidarity in Health: Reducing Health Inequalities in the EU', COM(2009)567.

- encourage Member States to develop appropriate tools and methods for evaluation as a prerequisite for designing evidence based policies for Roma inclusion, on the basis of lessons learned inter alia through the evaluation of the Pilot Project on Roma Inclusion;
- reinforce coordination between the ERDF, ESF and the EAFRD¹⁷, in particular at the regional and local level, when using the funds, for the purpose of promoting and facilitating an integrated approach in housing (in line with the provisions of the modified Art 7 (2) of the ERDF Regulation) or in other fields;
- provide information and technical support to Member States on the efficient use of the Structural Funds and of the Rural Development Fund in tackling socioeconomic exclusion of the Roma;
- take account of the results of the evaluation of the EU Structural Funds interventions for Roma, of the Pilot Project on Roma inclusion, and of the study on successful projects, programmes and policies for Roma inclusion when developing the next generation of European Union Structural Funds and programmes;
- address the inclusion of Roma when developing and implementing the ‘European Platform against Poverty’ Flagship Initiative, proposed by the Commission as part of the EU 2020 Strategy;
- invite Member States to address Roma issues when reporting on the implementation of national policies in all fields which are relevant for Roma inclusion (such as education, employment, social protection and social inclusion, and health) in the framework of the Open Method of Coordination and of the EU2020 Strategy. The Commission will integrate a specific employment-related focus on Roma into the Mutual Learning Programme 2010-2011;
- review its policy and programmes concerning Roma, in the context of enlargement, with a view to further developing and improving the relevant financial assistance under IPA

3.2. Policy coherence

Real change can only be based on effective policy implementation. Effective policies need coherent planning. Coherent planning needs the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, political support and the allocation of the necessary resources from the respective decision-making levels. These considerations and an analysis of the challenges ahead prove the need for stronger and more effective coordination and a concentration of forces.

The European Platform for Roma inclusion offers a forum for cooperation in this area and the Common Basic Principles for Roma Inclusion, elaborated under the Platform, provide a common framework. The Principles emphasise that programmes and policies which target Roma must not exclude members of other groups who share similar socio-economic circumstances.¹⁸ The Principles also stress that programmes and policies must aim for the mainstream in order to avoid the separation of Roma-focused interventions from broader

¹⁷ Art. 9 of the General Regulation of the EU Structural Funds.

¹⁸ Council Document 10394/09, annex: in particular Common Basic Principle no. 2.

policy initiatives.¹⁹ Finally, the Principles put a strong focus on the creation of ownership, embracing local authorities, NGOs and Roma communities.

The mainstreaming of Roma issues into all relevant national and European policies as well as the mobilisation of mainstream instruments for Roma inclusion require robust efforts and the necessary resources for monitoring the implementation and for designing future policies and instruments. Civil society organisations, notably Roma organisations, need to be involved in this process at all stages and at all levels.

Making processes more effective

The Commission will:

- support successive Council Presidencies in making the Platform more effective. The Commission will provide support to each Presidency in the organisation of a Platform meeting;
- support Presidencies with the organisation of future Roma summits;
- apply the Common Basic Principles for Roma Inclusion when designing, implementing and evaluating policies which are relevant to Roma inclusion;
- explore the most effective ways to ensure in its internal procedures that the mainstreaming of Roma issues in all relevant policies is guaranteed;
- enable the Roma themselves to influence policy processes, including through cofinancing the operations of a European level network active in representing the Roma;

4. DEVELOPING MODEL APPROACHES

There is a large and growing body of experience in the EU of which policy interventions work and which do not. However this knowledge is not yet easily accessible or digestible for public policy makers. Moreover it is not available in a form which is readily adapted to different situations. Roma communities in the EU27 as well as in candidate countries and potential candidates are not homogeneous groups. This heterogeneity means that there cannot be a single strategy: rather there is a need for differentiated approaches that take account of geographical, economic, social, cultural and legal contexts.

While each context is unique, four major types can be identified:

- Roma communities living in disadvantaged, highly concentrated (sub)urban districts, possibly close to other ethnic minorities and disadvantaged members of the majority;
- Roma communities living in disadvantaged parts of small cities/villages in rural regions and in segregated rural settlements isolated from majority cities/villages;
- mobile Roma communities with citizenship of the country or of another EU country;

¹⁹ Council Document 10394/09, annex: in particular Common Basic Principle no. 4.

- mobile and sedentary Roma communities who are third-country nationals, refugees, stateless persons or asylum seekers.

In many Member States several or even all of these types are present (although the number of mobile communities is generally relatively small compared to sedentary communities). Across the different Roma communities, women and children are exposed to particularly high risks.

Core socio-economic issues, such as access to the labour market and to self employment, and to non-segregated quality education, housing and health services, are vital to ensure inclusion for all Roma (as for all other people). Other issues, however, such as the lack of documents proving land ownership or the lack of ID documents, are more relevant for some types of community than for others.

Public policy interventions have to take into account, too, the features of the urban or rural environments in which the communities are living as well as the legal status of their members. For example, improvements with regard to the enrolment of Roma children in mainstream (early childhood education and care) schools might require in one case providing extra resources to individual schools, in others changing the admission procedures, the boundaries of school districts, the provision of public transport, the issuing of ID documents for the parents or the involvement of intercultural mediators.

The Commission therefore intends to assist policy makers by developing a set of model approaches. Building on best practice, each model would address the needs of the major types of Roma community, including their particularly vulnerable subgroups, and suggest the most appropriate targeted public-policy interventions. Each model would identify the key players and legal and financial instruments needed to implement a local, regional or national integration agenda and outline possible initiatives in order to improve Roma access to education, employment, health and housing. This would be completed by a list of initiatives to combat discrimination, to apply gender mainstreaming and to provide protection for particularly vulnerable subgroups. Guidance would be given on how to monitor implementation and how to communicate progress to the different categories of stakeholders.

The application of these model approaches would not be mandatory but Member States would be encouraged to take one or more of them into account when structuring their Roma inclusion policies. The Commission would discuss with Member States how the implementation and the monitoring of these model approaches could be integrated into the existing Open Methods of Coordination and the implementation of the European Platform against Poverty and could be supported by the EU financial instruments.

The Commission will develop these model approaches with the help of internal and external expertise and of relevant fora, notably the European Platform for Roma Inclusion.

5. CONCLUSION

The European Union needs to build on the strong mobilisation in the EU institutions, Member States and international organisations and within civil society in support of the better social and economic integration of Roma.

Greater cooperation between national, European and international players can increase the effectiveness of the range of available instruments in achieving the inclusion of Roma

communities. The European Platform for Roma inclusion and the Common Basic Principles provide a solid foundation for strengthening this cooperation.

In line with these Principles, Roma issues should be systematically mainstreamed into all relevant European and national policies. Policies which maintain or promote the segregation of Roma communities or the provision of segregated housing, education or other services for Roma should be ended. This does not however preclude the provision of targeted or positive action measures as permitted in the relevant EU legislation.

The specific task for the Commission in the mid-term (2010-2012) is to build on the experience gained from evaluating the impact of national and European instruments and policies. In addition to the commitments set out above, it will do this in particular by, firstly, developing a set of model approaches for the social and economic integration of Roma, and, secondly, ensuring that the preparation of measures to implement the EU 2020 Strategy as well as of programmes in the new financing period provide specific solutions to the problems of the different types of Roma communities.