

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
EUROPEAN ROMA RIGHTS CENTER
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EUROPEAN NETWORK AGAINST RACISM
OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE
SPOLU INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION
MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP INTERNATIONAL
EUROPEAN ROMA GRASSROOTS ORGANISATION
ROMA EDUCATION FUND
FONDACION SECRETARIADO GITANO

EU ROMA POLICY COALITION



28 September 2009, Brussels

EU Roma Policy Coalition's position before the II Roma Platform meeting

The EU Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC) is a gathering of NGOs operating at EU level in the areas of human rights, active citizenship, anti-discrimination, anti-racism, social inclusion and Roma rights. It is the mission of the ERPC to propose and advocate sustainable and comprehensive strategies for EU institutions aiming to tackle the discrimination, poverty and social exclusion that Roma communities face in Europe. The ERPC supports a policy-making and policy exchange process among Governments, institutions and Member States, which leads to adopting common strategic targets (areas) under one EU policy framework that enables Member States to make the most of EU instruments for social inclusion and non-discrimination.

On the occasion of the Second Roma Platform meeting (28 September 2009, Brussels), organized by the Swedish Presidency of the EU and the European Commission, the ERPC would like to express its concerns about the following issues:

1. The Roma Platform process is failing to identify and define key target areas which are necessary to achieve a coherent, coordinated and strategic EU approach to Roma issues. The Platform process is rather non-transparent, lacks substantial planning, non-inclusive for Roma NGOs and lacks policy orientation. As such, this situation hinders the development of an effective EU Roma Strategy. Therefore, the ERPC recommends that the EU Member States, as well as the European Commission, begin promoting a comprehensive approach that will respond effectively to the serious challenges that Roma are facing presently through extending the priorities of the Platform to include employment, health care, housing, access to justice and hate crime and violence against Roma.
2. The Roma Platform is lacking the dedicated structure within the European Commission needed to develop the strategic work of the process itself. Therefore, we recommend the establishment of a Secretariat (coordinative and policy mandate) for the integrated Roma Platform as soon as possible. In addition, the European Commission should proactively seek the inclusion of dedicated and skilled Romani staff members in this structure.

3. The meetings of the Roma Platform should include participants from the EU member states, the Western Balkans, high level Commission officials as well as a solid representation of Roma and Roma- oriented NGOs.
4. The growing Anti-Romani sentiment and Romaphobia in Europe should be one of the key elements of the integrated Roma Platform, as they are indicative of the levels of discrimination and exclusion still faced by the Roma. Therefore, any kind of anti-Roma attacks, murders and brutality by groups or even states should be condemned by the Roma Platform itself.
5. The Integrated Roma Platform should build upon the experiences of other organizations and initiatives such as the Decade of Roma Inclusion, the Action Plan for improving the situation of the Roma and Sinti issues in the OSCE area, the Council of Europe and the European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds expertise. Mechanisms should also exist to help facilitate the participation of accession countries in the workings of the EU Roma Platform.
6. The Integrated Roma Platform should benefit fully from the will and capacity of the European Roma Policy Coalition to actively participate in this process as a whole.