

PRESS STATEMENT

A step in the right direction: EU Roma Framework adopted across the Union

(Brussels, 19 May 2011) In a climate of growing discrimination, violence and harassment of Europe's Roma population, the European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC) has welcomed today's adoption by all 27 EU countries of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. The framework, agreed under the aegis of the Employment, Social Policy, Health & Consumer Affairs Council (ESPCO), commits the 27 member states to systematically tackling the socio-economic exclusion Roma people across Europe are forced to endure.

"Given the hostile treatment many Roma people encounter, the framework mustn't be a litany of lofty sentiments," said Nele Meyer, ERPC's coordinator. *"The Commission and member states must swiftly combat racism and xenophobia and encourage fuller integration of our Roma communities and greater empowerment. There must be tangible results."*

The Coalition expects member states to translate the framework's human rights commitments into ambitious strategies to integrate Roma people into mainstream society. It has pressed for specific goals to assess each country's delivery of agreed results. To do this, the ERPC has recommended that national governments work closely with the European Commission, creating a robust coordination and monitoring system to help them. The Coalition has welcomed the Roma Task Force's continued contribution to these goals.

ESPCO has recognised the need to protect fundamental rights, chiefly by combatting discrimination and segregation, if the widespread poverty and socio-economic disadvantage Roma people suffer is to be successfully tackled. The ERPC has urged member states to prioritise anti-discrimination measures and fighting racism. The Coalition has also stressed the need to pay special attention to Romani women and girls.

"The framework envisages civil society's help in developing and implementing the strategies", said Meyer. *"Roma organisations and others are ready to find solutions with national governments. But we need clear consultation processes, nationally and at EU level, to be promptly set up to allow full participation in the review and the development of national strategies which are due by the year-end."*

The ERPC 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, the European Roma Rights Centre, the European Roma Information Office, the Open Society Institute, European Network Against Racism, Minority Rights Group International, the European Roma Grassroots Organizations Network, Policy Center for Roma and Minorities, the Roma Education Fund, and Fundación Secretariado Gitano

From May 2011 to November 2011, the ERPC's rotating chairmanship is held by Amnesty International in close cooperation with Fundación Secretariado Gitano and the European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network

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