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Dear Sir/Madam,

The European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) is an international public interest legal organisation which monitors the human rights of Roma in Europe and provides legal defense in case of human rights violations. The ERRC is deeply concerned about the public humiliation of Romani children in Lille, France on the 14<sup>th</sup> June by English football fans who had travelled to watch the UEFA European Football Championships (Euro 16).

According to the information compiled by various sources, four Romani children were publically humiliated on the street by English football fans in Lille. The English football supporters threw coins and bottles on the ground mocking and humiliating the Romani children collecting them. Certain football enthusiasts even encouraged the children to fight amongst themselves to collect the coins, as well as some reports of fans making children drink beer in return for small change. The police officers standing not far from venue of the incident did not take any measures to protect the children from abuse and maltreatment.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Russian journalist who filmed the football fans said “police were not far from here, but they did not do anything” <http://france3-regions.francetvinfo.fr/nord-pas-de-calais/euro-lille-des-anglais-humilient-des-enfants-roms-en-leur-jetant-des-pieces-et-des-bouteilles-1024237.html>

Unfortunately this is not the first instance of mistreatment of Romani individuals by football fans. Earlier in March 2016 a similar case was reported in Madrid where Romani women became victims of similar disgraceful acts by PSV Eindhoven fans. The Dutch football team responded promptly by condemning this shameful act and punishing the offenders with a stadium ban of between 12 and 36 months<sup>2</sup>. The ERRC in this incident notified UEFA also, who responded with assurances of their commitment to tackling anti-social and racist behaviour in the coming Euro 16 Championships.

The ERRC calls on the Football Association to identify the persons involved in this degrading act. As the offenders are identified to be supporters of the English football team, the ERRC requests a response from the Football Association and UEFA explaining their positions and the actions they intend to take. The ERRC kindly requests that UEFA, and the Football Association inform us as soon as these fans are identified, we would greatly appreciate hearing what specific action will be taken to penalize those responsible for such demeaning behavior.

We share the concerns expressed by Milena Santerini, the General Rapporteur against Racism and Intolerance for the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), who reported that a number of racist acts had been committed against Roma women by football supporters in the streets of various European cities. Our concerns are heightened by the fact that since the beginning of 2016, and with the commencing of the Euros 2016, the frequency of incidents involving football supporters, including English football fans, has grown. We remain concerned that Romani people, in particularly vulnerable children and women, are persecuted by racist football supporters visiting France for the tournament this summer.

The ERRC greatly appreciates that for over a decade UEFA has highlighted combating racism, discrimination and intolerance in football as its priority, and has used public events to convey such messages including through its *"No to Racism campaign"*. In the light of the Euros 2016, in a letter sent to the ERRC in April 2016, UEFA restated its commitment *"for football to be played in safe environment free of any form of racism and intolerance"*. The ERRC would like to know precisely what steps UEFA and the Football Association plan to take to counter racist and abusive behavior by visiting and home supporters. We would like to reiterate that UEFA's comprehensive anti-discrimination policy includes education and campaigning, but also sanctions among other measures.

In the interests of football and of the European Championships, we call on UEFA, and the Football Association to publicly condemn this demeaning act of racism and intolerance against Romani children, to penalize the offenders with appropriate sanctions, and, where necessary, to liaise with the local police in identifying and prosecuting those involved with these humiliating acts.

We thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Đorđe Jovanović  
President  
European Roma Rights Centre

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/football/news/uefa-spanish-authorities-called-act-7566452>