

15 February 2011

Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán
Minister of Foreign Affairs, János Martonyi
Minister of Public Administration and Justice, Tibor Navracsics
Minister of State for Social Inclusion, Zoltán Balog
European Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, Viviane Reding
European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Andor László

CC: Head of the Roma Taskforce and European Commission Director-General for Justice, Françoise Le Bail
CC: Special Representative for Roma Issues to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Jeroen Schokkenbroek

Re: Request for Consultation with NGOs on EU Roma Policy

Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Ministers, Honourable Commissioners,

We, the undersigned European and Hungarian Romani and non-Romani organisations, would like to express our appreciation to the Hungarian Government and the European Commission, which have made the development of a European Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (Framework) their priority. We are very hopeful that the Hungarian Government's support for this initiative will allow the successful completion of this Framework, which has been in discussion for long time, in consultation with civil society. Thus, we are writing to request that the Hungarian Government and the European Commission – which is preparing the proposal for the Framework - initiate an open consultation process with NGOs with regard to their activities related to Roma. We are particularly concerned that this is established in the shortest time possible considering the pivotal role of the Hungarian EU Presidency in the adoption of the Framework. The Hungarian Government set the adoption of this Framework as one of the key priorities of its EU Presidency, which should be proposed to the EPSCO Council and the European Council for adoption in May and June 2011, respectively.

There is vast knowledge and expertise on Roma issues among civil society organisations in Hungary and other European countries and this expertise could serve as quality input for the work of the Hungarian Government and the European Commission. Furthermore, the Protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, annexed to the Amsterdam Treaty describes that the EU institutions: "should [...] consult widely before proposing legislation, and, wherever appropriate, publish consultation documents."¹

Therefore, we request that a schedule of regular meetings be established for NGO consultation in the preparation of the following initiatives:

1. the European Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies;
2. the Presidency proposal for Council Conclusions on Roma (in all Councils leading up to and including the European Council in June 2011);
3. the Informal Contact Group Meeting scheduled for 18 February in Brussels; and
4. the Roma Platform Meeting scheduled for 7 and 8 April in Budapest.

We also request that the Hungarian Government, in partnership with the European Commission, financially support an international Preparatory NGO Meeting ahead of the 7-8 April Roma Platform Meeting in Budapest to enable NGO consultation and delivery of concrete NGO inputs at the Platform meeting itself. Such an undertaking would be in line with UN and OSCE practices and would clearly signal the commitment of the Hungarian Presidency and the European Commission to Roma inclusion and civil society in general. It would also serve as a model for future Presidencies to ensure meaningful NGO participation in the Platform.

¹ Protocol on the Application of the Principles of Subsidiarity and Proportionality, available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/en/treaties/dat/12007L/htm/C2007306EN.01015001.htm>. In addition, a 2001 Commission Communication established minimum standards for consulting external interested parties on EU legislation and policies, which requires: (1) the content of consultation is clear; (2) relevant parties have an opportunity to express their opinions; (3) consultations are published widely in order to meet all target audiences, (4) participants are given sufficient time for responses (8 weeks for open public consultations); and (5) acknowledgement and adequate feedback is provided. See: Communication from the Commission, Towards a reinforced culture of consultation and dialogue - General principles and minimum standards for consultation of interested parties by the Commission, 2002, available at: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2002:0704:FIN:EN:PDF>.

We request that the Hungarian Government organise the first consultation meeting before 28 February 2011 to begin discussion of these very important developments. We would very much welcome that the Draft of the Framework be made available prior to or during the consultation meeting. We also request that the Hungarian Presidency opens invitations to the upcoming Informal Contact Group on 18 February in Brussels to a larger pool of Romani and non-Romani organisations dealing with Roma issues.

We look forward to collaborating with you.

Sincerely,

Orsolya Jeney, Director, **Amnesty International Magyarország / Amnesty International Hungary**
Erzsebet Mohacsi, President, **Esélyt a Hátrányos Helyzetű Gyerekeknek Alapítvány / Chance for Children Foundation**

András Kádár, Co-chair, **Magyar Helsinki Bizottság / Hungarian Helsinki Committee**

Györgyi Tóth, Chair, **Magyar Női Érdekvédelem Szövetség / Hungarian Women's Lobby**

Neil Clarke, Managing Director, **Minority Rights Group Europe**

Erika Muhi, Director, **Nemzeti és Etnikai Kisebbségi Jogvédő Iroda / Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities**

Kalman Mizsei, Co-Chair of Roma Policy Panel, **Open Society Foundations**

Zeljko Jovanovic, Director of Roma Initiatives, **Open Society Foundations**

Kinga Rethy, Deputy Director of Roma Initiatives, **Open Society Foundations**

Agnes Daróczi, Vice-President, **Phralipe**

Balázs Dénes, Executive Director, **Társaság a Szabadságjogokért/The Hungarian Civil Liberties Union**

Deyan Kolev, Chairman, **Amalipe Center for Interethnic Dialogue and Tolerance**

Rudko Kawczynski, President, **European Roma and Travellers Forum**

Brigitte Triems, President, **European Women's Lobby**

Esmerelda Romanez, President, **Federation of Kale, Manouches & Sinti Women / Fédération des femmes cale/kalé, manouches & sinté**

European Roma Policy Coalition:

Ruus Dijksterhuis, Executive Director, **European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network (European Roma Policy Coalition Chair)**

Nicolas Beger, Director, **Amnesty International European Institutions Office (European Roma Policy Coalition Co-Chair)**

Robert Kushen, Executive Director, **European Roma Rights Centre (European Roma Policy Coalition Co-Chair)**

Michael Privot, Director, **European Network Against Racism**

Ivan Ivanov, Executive Director, **European Roma Information Office**

Bernard Rorke, Representative to the ERPC, **Open Society Foundations**

Valeriu Nicolae, President, **Policy Center for Roma and Minorities**

Costel Bercus, Chairman, **Roma Education Fund**

Isidro Rodríguez, Executive Director, **Fundación Secretariado Gitano**

