PRESS STATEMENT

Anti-Roma statements in France: a race to be the most outrageous?

Brussels, 10 July 2013 – On 7 July, Christian Estrosi, French Member of Parliament and Mayor of the city of Nice, made public racist statements targeting the Roma and Traveller population and threatened, among others, to install surveillance cameras in Roma and Traveller camps. A few days before, Jean-Marie Le Pen had made similar anti-Roma statements. The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) strongly condemns this stigmatising competition using hate speech to gain electoral support and calls on politicians in France and across Europe to instead start proposing constructive solutions to ensure Roma inclusion - for the benefit of all.

ENAR Chair Sarah Isal said: “These anti-Roma statements are disgraceful, all the more so coming from Christian Estrosi, an elected representative of the mainstream UMP political party. Comments fuelling hatred and stigmatisation against any group on the basis of their ethnic or national origin have a particularly damaging impact when they come from public figures and politicians.”

Instead of proposing populist and ineffective repressive measures, French local politicians such as Estrosi should start by implementing the law requiring that towns with populations exceeding 5,000 provide suitable camping grounds for Traveller communities. This law has so far not been respected in Nice.

“Politicians should live up to their responsibilities as elected representatives to provide for all their citizens on an equal basis and not indulge in such dangerous and divisive statements. Together in Europe, we can achieve great things. Let’s just do it”, said Isal.

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Notes to the editor:
1. The European Network Against Racism (ENAR aisbl) stands up against racism and discrimination and advocates for equality and solidarity for all in Europe. We connect local and national anti-racist NGOs throughout Europe and act as an interface between our member organisations and the European institutions. We voice the concerns of ethnic and religious minorities in European and national policy debates.