

ERPC's Call for Action to the European Commission, French and Italian authorities

The continuous dismantling and forced evictions of Romani settlements across France and Italy and the targeting of Roma to expel from France are in breach of European Union and international human rights standards. Recent events underline European Union's failure to take responsibility to promote a climate where all its citizens can enjoy and fully exercise their fundamental rights. Roma continue to live in alienation and deprivation and are victims of serious human rights abuses.

There is an urgent need to change this situation and make equality a reality where the rights of all are fully acknowledged, protected, respected and exercised without discrimination.

How can this be achieved?

The ERPC would like to address the following recommendations to improve the situation of Roma to the different political levels:

European Commission

- Encourage Member States to successfully implement the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and to follow up on the Commission's recommendations included in its assessment of the strategies in May 2012;
- Publicly condemn such discriminatory acts and human rights abuse, and follow up on the EC Communication from May 2012 with France and other Member States to develop and implement a set of measures targeting migrant Roma enabling them to enjoy their fundamental rights and their integration in society;
- Make every use of available EU legal instruments and processes to combat discrimination and support political leaders to tackle discrimination against Roma. Take strong action under EU anti-discrimination legislation, including the commencement of infringement proceedings, when international standards and safeguards on non-discrimination and housing rights are ignored when evicting Roma from their homes;
- Make every use of available EU legal instruments and processes to combat discrimination against Roma in the application of the Directive on Free Movement. Take strong legal action, including the commencement of infringement proceedings, to prevent the further mass deportation and expulsion of Roma by Member States;

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- Urge Member States to respect existing EU legislation on combating racism and xenophobia, i.e. the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the EU anti-discrimination directives.

French and Italian governments

- Effectively implement national anti-discrimination legislation;
- Revise the National Roma Integration Strategy to include targeted measures to promote the integration of Romani migrants;
- Stop the scheme of so-called “voluntary returns” to the country of origin, giving money to Roma to leave the country during coercive state responses;
- Promote positive measures to challenge discrimination against Roma and stereotypes by providing awareness-raising and training programmes on intercultural dialogue to main actors such as the police, lawyers, judges, media, civil society and school teachers in order to develop their intercultural skills and to promote a positive understanding of cultural diversity;
- Support sufficient allocation for programmes that foster equality and fundamental rights in the negotiations on the future multiannual financial framework to ensure Structural Funds are available for Roma inclusion and monitor that they are effectively used and have a positive impact on the needs of Roma communities;
- Raise awareness about the benefits of inclusion among local and regional authorities. Investments in Roma inclusion are far cheaper than the costs of maintaining their current substandard socio-economic condition. For example, improving the employment rate of Roma can potentially grow the national GDP;
- Ensure the participation of Roma and other civil society organisations in the implementation and monitoring of the National Roma Integration Strategy. Their proactive participation in the process is essential to the success of the EU Framework and the National Roma Integration Strategy;
- Work with other Member States and exchange experiences of work and information;
- Gather statistical data disaggregated by ethnicity on the situation of Roma in relation to employment, education, housing and health to better evaluate and respond to their needs.

Local and regional authorities

- Ensure that the Structural Funds 2014-2020, in particular the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) are effectively used for Roma inclusion;
- Provide equal access to basic services to all citizens by fighting discrimination in education, labour market, healthcare and housing and by adopting measures to improve the socio-economic situation of Roma;
- Effectively implement the four pillars of the EU Framework (i.e. education, employment, healthcare and housing);
- Refrain from evicting and expelling Roma in the absence of due process and all other safeguards as guaranteed in international legal standards.

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