



European Network Against Racism
Réseau européen contre le racisme
Europäisches Netz gegen Rassismus

Roma inclusion

Position paper of the European Network Against Racism in view
of the Council of Europe's high level meeting on Roma and
Travellers, 20 October 2010, Strasbourg

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Contact: Sophie Kammerer, Policy Officer - sophie@enar-eu.org

The European Network against Racism (ENAR) is a network of some 700 NGOs working to combat racism in all EU Member States. ENAR is determined to fight racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, to promote equality of treatment between EU citizens and third country nationals, and to link local/regional/national and European initiatives.

European Network Against Racism
60 Rue Gallait, B-1030 Brussels
Tel: +32 2 229 35 70 - Fax: +32 2 229 35 75
Visit ENAR's website: www.enar-eu.org

Recent developments in France have given unprecedented visibility to the problems faced by Roma populations in Europe, offering a unique opportunity for European leaders to launch concrete actions to progress towards equal participation for the Roma in all areas of life. Therefore, ENAR very much welcomes the initiative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, to hold a High Level Meeting on Roma and Travellers aimed at providing a political impetus to closer, more focused, sustained and effective cooperation regarding Roma and Travellers at the pan-European level.

The first priority of the High Level Meeting should be to send a strong common pan-European message against the stigmatisation of the Roma, the use of discriminatory and inflammatory rhetoric, and the introduction of measures targeting a specific ethnic community. Such open discrimination at the highest level of state is unacceptable for members of the Council of Europe, contradicts its core values and constitutes a clear breach of its human rights instruments. The Council of Europe should respond strongly to such infringements of minority rights by France and other Member States. France is indeed not alone; other Western European countries - Italy, Denmark, Sweden, among others - have expelled Roma citizens back to their countries of origin or dismantled Roma camps without providing any alternatives. This is not to mention the systematic discrimination and extreme deprivation faced by the Roma in Eastern Europe - where a significant proportion of the overall Roma population in Europe lives - and which encourage the Roma to move across borders in search of a better life. ENAR calls on all pan-European leaders to take a firm and united stand against policies which deliberately stigmatise and discriminate against Roma.

ENAR believes the following priorities should guide a reinforced pan-European co-operation on Roma and Travellers:

1. Fight against persistent discrimination and avoid further stigmatisation
2. Promote inclusion in employment, education, health and housing
3. Promote progress in data collection, monitoring progress in inclusion, and specific target setting for the Roma population
4. Find human rights driven solutions to intra-European migration of Roma
5. Ensure synergies between the different initiatives in place (Roma Decade, EU Platform for Roma inclusion, etc), as well as the effective participation of civil society, in particular Roma NGOs

The above mentioned priorities could be translated in practice by inter alia the following initiatives:

- Issue a common declaration strongly condemning stigmatisation and discrimination, and recalling the Council of Europe's fundamental principles of human rights and non-discrimination;
- Reach an agreement among the participating governments to refrain from using stigmatising and inflammatory rhetoric against Roma and Travellers;

- Encourage Member States to collect data for monitoring the situation of Roma and Travellers on a strictly anonymous, voluntary and self-defining basis, in compliance with the rules on the protection of personal data, to bring more insight to inclusion policies;
- Collectively define and use common indicators to measure the situation of minorities, including Roma and Travellers;
- Encourage Member States and local authorities to set national and local targets for Roma inclusion in employment, education, health and housing, with a particular focus on improving Romani women's rights¹;
- Encourage Member States and local authorities to put in place positive action measures for Roma inclusion in employment, education, health and housing, and for their political participation². It is important to keep in mind that inclusion and participation should encompass the different segments of Roma communities ensuring that the most marginalised groups (women, youth, persons with disabilities and others) are included;
- Reach an agreement among participating governments to put an immediate end to forced evictions, expulsions and segregation in education and in health services;
- Produce and collect material on the benefits of Roma inclusion for the whole society;
- Ensure accessibility of the pan-European facility for good practices to grassroots organisations, avoid duplication with existing instruments and facilitate complementarities. The facility should be easy to use and to contribute to.

We very much hope the Secretary General will be able to take our suggestions on board for the High Level Meeting. This paper is concise, but we remain at your disposal should you need any further information or clarification on our position or proposals.

¹ The European Parliament resolution on the Situation of Romani women in the European Union adopted in 2006 highlighted that Romani women continue to face the greatest level of discrimination throughout Europe and urged public authorities in the EU to ensure Romani women and girls equal access to education and health care, including an end to segregation in schools and hospitals, see: European Parliament, Resolution on the Situation of Romani Women in the European Union:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2006-0244+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

² See ENAR Factsheets on positive action <http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/pdf/FS35%20-%20Positive%20action.pdf>, and on Political Participation of Roma, Traveller and Sinti Communities http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/pdf/FS32_roma_political_participation_may2007.pdf