



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

PRESS RELEASE

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Urgent action is needed to put an end to anti-Gypsism and violence against the Roma in Europe

Tomorrow the world will celebrate International Roma Day. Unfortunately there is very little to celebrate: Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities in Europe continue to experience widespread disadvantage and increasing racist violence, and have been identified by ENAR as being one of the most vulnerable minority groups in essentially all areas of life.

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) is very worried that the Roma have become the target of organised racist violence in several European countries and urges EU governments to speak out against violence against Roma motivated by racial hatred and to show their political will in fighting anti-Gypsism.

The EU Fundamental Rights Agency has acknowledged that in times of economic crisis, communities such as the Roma, along with migrants and other vulnerable groups, tend to become easy 'scapegoats' for extremist movements and populist politicians and that such 'scapegoating' has resulted in an increase in the number of violent hate crimes in some countries.

It is therefore essential that politicians and political parties, not only on the margins of politics but also within the mainstream, do not promote messages fuelling xenophobic and racist attitudes. In particular in the context of upcoming European Parliament elections, political parties must act against racism in the political discourse and sign the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society.

ENAR President Mohammed Aziz said: "The worrying trend towards increasing anti-Roma violence and rhetoric calls for immediate action by all EU governments and institutions to curb anti-Gypsism across Europe. The European Union must adopt a comprehensive and ambitious approach to the Roma that will secure real change in the lives of the ten million Roma in Europe."

ENAR Director Pascale Charhon said: "ENAR also hopes that the imminent creation of an EU Roma Platform (to be launched at the end of April) will facilitate the development of a comprehensive EU Framework Strategy for Roma Inclusion by EU member states and institutions. This strategy should ensure that Roma communities are protected from discrimination, have equal access to education, healthcare and housing, and are empowered through participation in the civic and economic life of their country."

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) is a network of European NGOs working to combat racism in all EU member states and represents more than 600 NGOs spread around the European Union. Its establishment was a major outcome of the 1997 European Year Against Racism. ENAR aims to fight racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, to promote equality of treatment between EU citizens and third country nationals, and to link local/regional/national initiatives with European initiatives.

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