

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
EUROPEAN ROMA RIGHTS CENTER  
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EUROPEAN NETWORK AGAINST RACISM  
OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE  
SPOLU INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION  
MINORITY RIGHTS GROUP INTERNATIONAL  
EUROPEAN ROMA GRASSROOTS ORGANISATION  
ROMA EDUCATION FUND  
FONDACION SECRETARIADO GITANO



6 September 2010

To:

President of the European Commission  
European Commissioner for Home Affairs;  
European Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship  
European Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs and Inclusion  
European Commissioner for Inter-institutional Relations and Administration  
European Commissioner for Regional Policy;  
European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development  
Permanent Representatives of EU Member States and (pre-) Accession Countries;  
Members of European Parliament

Concerns: Roma inclusion policy in the EU

Your Excellencies,

Following the recent measures taken by the French government, such as forced evictions of Roma and Travellers from irregular settlements and the expulsion of many families to their countries of origin (Bulgaria and Romania), the ERPC is deeply concerned with the discrimination pursued against the Roma population by some Member States. Similar cases have been reported since last year in Germany, Italy and earlier this year in Denmark.

Every person involved in criminal activity should face legal action. However, the statements of some prominent European politicians relating the Roma community in its entirety directly with illegal settlements, human trafficking and children exploitation reinforce discrimination on ethnic grounds as well as existing prejudices against the largest ethnic minority in Europe.

The current anti-Roma policies risk encouraging a wave of racism across Europe and lead to a climate of impunity regarding anti-Gypsyism and violent attacks. Therefore, we urge the EU institutions to fulfill their role as Guardian of the Treaties and to strongly react to the critical policy developments in France and other Member States, if necessary by initiating legal proceedings for infringements to the legislation on free movement and to the Charter of Fundamental Rights, in particular non-discrimination.

The current situation also shows without a doubt that *social exclusion travels* and will continue to do so unless effective action is taken. A selective summit as the one taking place in France today, where only some Member States have been invited is no alternative to discussing an issue, which affects all EU member states and touches on the

founding principles of European cooperation, in an EU framework. Bilateral pressure is, in our view, a welcome – and even refreshing – complement to EU-level debate and policy frameworks. But to effectively deal with Roma exclusion and its consequences, the Union as whole has to take steps towards a comprehensive EU Framework Strategy on Roma Inclusion.

The European Council in 2008 invited the Member States and the Union to use all means to improve the inclusion of Roma; since that time the Council has renewed that call in two subsequent Conclusions. The upcoming Justice and Home Affairs Council and the 28/29 October European Council need to further the past declarations of the European Council and explicitly call on the Commission to present an EU Framework Strategy on Roma Inclusion. Such a Framework Strategy should include concrete targets, responsibilities and resources. It should highlight on the one hand the responsibility for and commitment of national governments to non-discrimination, equal citizenship and equal opportunities, and on the other the guiding and enabling role of Community policies, funding programmes and legislation in guaranteeing these rights for all citizens.

A working group under the joint responsibility of all relevant Commissioners should be established in the shortest time possible to formulate proposals. Furthermore, a next meeting of the EU Roma Platform should be announced shortly dealing specifically with the issue of intra-EU migration and Roma.

In 2008 and 2010 the European Parliament called on the European Commission to develop and adopt a Framework Strategy on Roma Inclusion. The ERPC believes there is still huge potential to achieve this and close the gap between the means available – to both Member States and the European Union – and actual policies today. In view of the ever-growing urgency, time for complacency is over. The inevitable alternative is the repetition of the social and political tensions within and between EU members that are manifest today. In this respect, the ERPC welcomes the European Parliament initiative to adopt a resolution addressing the situation of Roma in Europe on 9 September and its constant support towards the adoption of a European Roma Strategy.

The ERPC remains committed to supporting the process for the adoption of a European Framework Strategy on Roma, while it calls on the European institutions to respond effectively to violations of human rights standards and European values.

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