

EU-Roma Summit: words and action are needed

(Brussels, 15 September) On the eve of the EU's first "Roma Summit" the EU Roma Policy Coalition* (ERPC) urges the European Union to devise a long-term strategy to respect and protect the fundamental rights of Roma people.

The NGOs call on the Summit to commit to common standards and targets for achieving real progress. This would pave the way for national action plans, developed with active participation of Roma communities.

NGOs also call on the current EU Presidency to formally endorse such political commitments at the December European Council.

"It is important to sit down and discuss policies that work, but what we need is an EU-led proactive engagement that translates discussions into concrete steps for action. Enough time has passed, there needs to be a framework with objectives and deadlines" say Coalition members.

The ERPC remains concerned with the Commission's recent response to the census of Roma in Italy, which was widely perceived to give a green light to the Italian government's discriminatory Roma policies. The fact that key relevant documents have not been made public has created further ambiguity.

In such a context of contradictory signals, it is even more important that tomorrow's Roma Summit delivers a strong and clear commitment showing the EU is willing to act and not just discuss, in order to effectively promote the basic rights and inclusion of Roma in Europe.

EU institutions and member states should, at this Summit, ensure the fight against Roma discrimination is based on social inclusion policies, not on repression and security measures.

** The EU Roma Policy Coalition (Coalition) is an informal gathering of NGOs operating at EU level in the broader areas of human rights, anti-discrimination, anti-racism, social inclusion and Roma and Travellers rights.*

Current members of the ERPC are: Amnesty International, European Roma Rights Centre, European Roma Information Office, European Network Against Racism, Open Society Institute, Spolu Int. Foundation, Minority Rights Group International, European Roma Grassroots Organisation, Roma Education Fund and Fundacion Secretariado Gitano.