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EU ROMA POLICY COALITION



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Europe's Largest Ethnic Minority Calls for Tolerance and Inclusion

Statement from European Roma Policy Coalition on International Roma Day

BRUSSELS, 8 April 2009—In recognition of International Roma Day, the European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC), encourages the European Union and its Member States to tackle the recent wave of racist violence and expand opportunities for Roma across Europe.

“Roma are threatened by rising ethnic violence and face intense discrimination, but have tremendous potential to contribute to society,” said David Mark, ERPC coordinator.

Close to ten million Roma in the EU face poverty, social exclusion, and discrimination. Over the past year, Roma communities have faced brutal violence in Italy, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, with tension rising as the global financial crisis deepens.

“We need to celebrate our diversity and can do much more to include Roma communities,” said Mark. “Establishing coordinated programs to ensure access to education, housing, health care, and jobs for Roma through the European Union and its Member States would have a tremendous impact.”

The ERPC calls on political parties across Europe to renew their commitment to the principles of the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society, signed on 28 February 1998 in Utrecht by the Democratic Political Parties of Europe. Signatories commit to “defend basic human rights and democratic principles and to reject all forms of racist violence, incitement to racial hatred and harassment and any form of racial discrimination.” The ERPC urges signatories to uphold their pledge, and for parties who have not yet signed to do so.

This year, the Czech EU Presidency and the European Commission are committed to establishing an integrated EU Roma Platform. A comprehensive and unified European approach is essential for ensuring that Roma communities are protected from discrimination, have equal access to education, healthcare, and housing, and can participate fully in civic and economic life. ERPC urges the European Union to adopt a **Framework Strategy on Roma Inclusion**, developed in full consultation with Roma communities.

The European Roma Policy Coalition is an informal gathering of international non-governmental organisations working on human rights, anti-racism and minority rights.



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