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ERPC Statement

Essential Elements of the “EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies”

The European Commission’s announcement that it will present by April 2011 a proposal for an ‘EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies’ represents a step forward in Europe’s approach to tackling the discrimination and socio-economic exclusion of Roma in Europe. The European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC) congratulates the European Commission for committing to the development of the European Framework Strategy, which the ERPC has long been promoting and which the European Parliament has called for in consecutive resolutions on the situation of Roma in the European Union.

The proposed Framework promises a comprehensive and more effective EU-wide response - based on explicit responsibilities of all Member States and the European Commission - to the structural and systemic exclusion and lack of opportunities for Europe’s largest minority. Recent developments around Europe have demonstrated that this Framework is urgently required and that it must be intimately linked to the protection and fulfilment of fundamental rights. The Framework must provide a strong antidote to escalating tensions, half-measures and anti-Roma rhetoric. The Framework should be an EU policy to make a tangible difference in people’s lives. The strength of the mechanisms supporting the Framework and its content will define how effectively it will promote social inclusion and equality of Europe’s Roma.

The ERPC calls on the European Commission and the Task Force to actively seek and account for external governmental and non-governmental expertise needed to make the Framework effective and meet the expectations raised. The ERPC looks forward to providing constructive input in the Framework’s elaboration and offers the collective expertise and experience of its members on Roma issues to contribute to a strong and ambitious policy framework. Equally, the ERPC values and advocates for inclusion of Roma experts in the Framework’s development process. The ERPC elaborates here what it considers to be the essential elements of the proposed Framework.

Essential Elements of an Effective EU Framework for National Roma Inclusion Strategies

1. Division of Responsibilities

- 1.1 The European Commission’s role in coordination and its supervisory responsibility should be clearly elaborated in the Framework.
- 1.2 The Member States hold primary responsibility for implementing policies, programmes and actions to tackle Roma exclusion: under no circumstances should the Framework be a pretext for Member States to evade their obligations to ensure equal treatment, tackle discrimination and promote equal opportunities and social inclusion for Roma citizens in line with the EU Treaties.
- 1.3 Regional and local authorities, and decentralised government branches, are crucial actors in the implementation of national strategies: their responsibilities should be clearly outlined.

2 Strong Governance Mechanisms

- 2.1 The Framework should include clear EU and Member State accountability and enforcement mechanisms to guarantee effective implementation of the Framework and National Strategies, enforcement of fundamental human rights and consistency with the 10 Common Basic Principles for Roma Inclusion. The European Commission and Member States should regularly review the efficiency of the mechanisms.
- 2.2 The European Commission should establish a permanent cross-DG Unit to coordinate, monitor and evaluate implementation of the Framework.
- 2.3 The European Commission should use the Integrated EU Platform on Roma Inclusion to facilitate input from the Member States and Roma and pro-Roma non-governmental experts into policy

formulation and monitoring and as a platform for coordination, monitoring and evaluation of Framework implementation by and between the EU and the Member States.

- 2.4 The Member States should establish inter-ministerial executive bodies with responsibility for policy design, implementation and evaluation and budgetary discretion. Interventions should be prioritised in line with EU and Member State targets.
- 2.5 Effective mechanisms for vertical coordination between the various levels of government in the Member States must be put in place.
- 2.6 Fund management authorities should be included in all coordination processes, and regulations should be regularly reviewed and revised with a view to promoting achievement of the Framework objectives.

3 Mainstreaming and Targeting, Integrated and Model Approaches

- 3.1 The Framework should elaborate both mainstreamed and targeted approaches.
- 3.2 Full mainstreaming of Roma inclusion measures in all relevant EU, national, regional and local policies is a long-term goal: this requires specific Roma targets in mainstream policies whose achievement must be monitored and reported. The Framework should ensure that Roma inclusion is mainstreamed in EU initiatives including the Europe 2020 Strategy, its flagship initiatives and EU Framework policies.
- 3.3 The European Commission and the Member States should mainstream Roma inclusion in all relevant Open Method of Coordination and other existing mechanisms.
- 3.4 Targeted policies and interventions are required for short and medium term improvement.
- 3.5 The European Commission and Member States should ensure that no policy, programme or other measure entrenches or creates further segregation.
- 3.6 The Framework and National Strategies should include integrated approaches to Roma Inclusion to reflect the multidimensional nature of Roma exclusion.
- 3.7 The Framework and National Strategies should reflect and adapt as needed 'model approaches' that fit different Roma communities: the implementation of model approaches must follow proper consultation with communities.

4 Data Collection and Benchmarking

- 4.1 The Framework should require disaggregated data collection in all relevant policy areas, to establish baseline data and enable monitoring of progress towards set targets and indicators. Disaggregated data collection is necessary for both mainstreaming and targeted approaches.
- 4.2 The Framework should set out a long-term strategy for Roma Inclusion. It should establish common and national targets, indicators and timelines, as well as sector-based and overall benchmarks for Member States.

5 Monitoring and Evaluation

- 5.1 The Framework should establish a clear framework for monitoring results and impact at the Member State and EU level and for regular evaluation of strategies and interventions.
- 5.2 The Framework should stipulate mandatory annual reporting by Member States on implementation. The European Commission should annually report on its own actions and progress by Member States in terms of mainstreaming Roma inclusion across relevant policy areas and of targeted actions.

6 Policy and Funding Linkages

- 6.1 The Framework and National Strategies should elaborate clear and strong linkages between policy measures and financial programmes (EU, national and other relevant funding streams) to ensure lack of funding is not an obstacle to implementation.
- 6.2 The Framework should provide for strengthened coordination between EU funding streams to promote Roma inclusion – namely the Regional Development Fund, the Social Fund, the Rural Development Fund and other relevant EU funding programmes.

- 6.3 Relevant EU funding streams should be amended to include Roma inclusion as a horizontal priority and to promote complex approaches to inclusion.
- 6.4 Relevant EU and Member State funding streams should be amended to prohibit the use of financial resources for programming that results in segregation or other violations of fundamental rights, and to require equal opportunities planning prior to the disbursement of financing.
- 6.5 The Framework should elaborate methods of coordination with the EURoma network.

7 Anti-Discrimination and Fundamental Rights

- 7.1 The Framework and National Strategies must articulate the strong commitment of the EU and Member States to non-discrimination, equal treatment, positive action and condemnation of stigmatising rhetoric.
- 7.2 The Framework, National Strategies and their mechanisms must themselves promote equal opportunities for Roma.
- 7.3 The Framework and National Strategies should include measures to strengthen enforcement of respect for fundamental rights.
- 7.4 The Framework and National Strategies should include strong anti-discrimination and awareness-raising measures to tackle prejudice, discrimination and anti-Gypsyism, as a precondition for inclusion. The Framework should include actions targeting both Roma and non-Roma, focusing on equal and active citizenship and sharing responsibilities.
- 7.5 At the decentralised level, addressing the lack of capacity to implement policies and access EU funding should go hand in hand with tackling direct and indirect discrimination in administrations.

8 Scope

- 8.1 The Framework must comply with and fully reflect existing EU fundamental rights law (Charter of Fundamental Rights, Racial Equality Directive, Free Movement Directive, funding regulations, relevant national provisions).
- 8.2 The Framework's scope should be broad.
 - Non-discrimination, gender equality, children's rights and citizenship should be included as both cross-cutting priorities and independent thematic areas.
 - Social inclusion, including in particular equitable access to education and vocational training, employment, housing, health and social services should be included as priority thematic areas.
 - Freedom of movement, access to justice, prevention of anti-Roma crimes, ethnic profiling, and child protection should be explicitly addressed in distinct priorities.
- 8.3 The Framework's orientation, mechanisms and approaches should equally apply to (pre-) accession countries and countries with a sizeable Roma population falling under the European Neighbourhood Policy.
- 8.4 The Framework must address the situation, rights and approaches of citizens, EU citizens residing in other EU countries and third country nationals (who are entitled to equal treatment and access to various rights in comparison to other third country nationals).

9 Roma and Civil Society Participation

- 9.1 The Framework should promote the direct involvement of Roma in decision-making and policy development and implementation as a key success factor, at local, national and EU levels. Representative and independent Roma and pro-Roma watchdog organisations as well as service providers should be included. Community-based representative organisations, associations and coalitions should be consulted at the local, national and EU levels. Financially and politically independent NGOs have a key role in monitoring policy implementation.
- 9.2 The Framework should foresee long-term investment in grassroots organisation and empowerment.
- 9.3 The Framework should include actions to strengthen Roma human resources to redress the abysmal representation of Roma at all levels of government.