



Press statement

Member States step up commitment towards equality for Roma: The European Coalition of Roma and pro-Roma organisations welcomes the adoption of a Council Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation

Brussels 18 March 2021: A new Council Recommendation calls on EU Member States to consolidate efforts to adopt and implement measures to promote equality and effectively prevent and combat multiple and structural discrimination and antigypsyism as well as social and economic exclusion of Roma.

“We are happy to see such a strong EU Council Recommendation on Roma. It is now up to Member States to demonstrate a real commitment to tackling antigypsyism – as specific form of racism against Roma people – with a focus on non-discrimination, civil society participation and fighting poverty and social exclusion of Roma. This is a timely political moment for governments to be bold and far-reaching in their policy and funding proposals on Roma”, said *Gabriela Hrabanova, Director of ERGO Network*.

“With this Council Recommendation we expect Enlargement and Neighbourhood countries to follow the example and adopt national Roma strategic frameworks and targeted policies prioritising the fight against antigypsyism and improving the situation of Roma women and children, who are often the most vulnerable to discrimination and social marginalisation”, said *Adriatik Hasantari, Director of Roma Active Albania*.

“The renewed Council Recommendation on Roma addresses Roma youth under the objectives of equality, inclusion, participation and employment. It is high time that national governments and National Roma Contact Points follow these recommendations and prove their commitment to the inclusion of young Roma in the decision-making, implementation and monitoring of Roma-related policies up to 2030”, states *Marietta Herfort, Executive Director of Phiren Amenca International Network*.

“We very much welcome the renewal of the political will to Roma equality and inclusion. There is a clear message that inequality, racism and discrimination cannot continue to exist in Europe. We now have the best-ever policy instrument, but it needs to operate in the best-ever conditions by fully aligning it with mainstream policy frameworks and by taking the opportunities offered by the current financial instruments. We urge Member States and the European Commission not to miss another decade”, says *Isidro Rodríguez, Director of the Fundación Secretariado Gitano*.

“The Central Council of German Sinti and Roma welcomes the EU Council Recommendation on Roma. It sends a strong signal for the recognition of antigypsyism as the root cause for inequality, exclusion and discrimination of Sinti and Roma in Europe. Member States must now include Sinti and Roma in the development and implementation of effective national strategies. They should also improve their legal anti-discrimination frameworks and institutional settings, including monitoring, to effectively fight antigypsyism”, explains *Guillermo Ruiz, Policy Advisor of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma*.

“The European Public Health Alliance embraces the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union aiming to promote Roma equality, inclusion and participation. The organisation welcomes in particular the recommendations addressing healthcare and prevention, including vaccination services. Ensuring equal access to health and prevention services in line with the needs of different socio-economic groups among Roma is an indispensable step for achieving health equity and promoting equal participation in social and economic lives. Therefore, the European Public Health Alliance reiterates its calls for a stronger commitment at national and local levels, including the implementation of holistic and integrated policy measures to tackle systemic health inequalities affecting entire Roma communities and generations”. *Radost Zaharieva, Policy coordinator for Health Inequalities and Roma Health*

“In times when racism is on the rise, it is crucial that EU Member States recognize antigypsyism and take immediate actions to tackle it. In order to improve the situation of Roma, ERIO encourages all responsible national and local authorities to effectively implement the renewed Council Recommendation as a necessary step to eradicate the dramatic levels of antigypsyism that Europe’s Roma are facing. It is not enough to agree to the principle of equality for Roma. Adopting the Recommendation will not make any difference to how Roma experience equality in their daily lives, unless followed up with concrete action that will translate commitment into policies, programmes, laws and budget lines.” said *Ivan Ivanov, director of the European Roma Information Office*.

“The European Roma and Travellers Forum welcomes the new Council Recommendation but is disappointed that it does not reflect the situation of nomadic and semi-nomadic Travellers and Romanies in Western European countries. We urge Member States to address in their national Roma strategies the antigypsyism faced by nomadic and semi-nomadic Travellers and Romanies, particularly the lack of adapted schools systems, discriminatory administrative rules, neutral laws, domiciliation criteria, lack of legal status for mobile accommodations, anti-nomadic and repressive legislation and policies, criminalization of the nomadic way of life, forced sedentarisation and the lack of a comprehensive approach giving equal status and rights to the nomadic way of life. Anti-nomadism should be named as a specific form of

antigypsyism, adequately condemned and prosecuted”, said *Miranda Vuolasranta, President of the European Roma and Travellers Forum.*

“This Council Recommendation is an important step towards recognising racial inequalities as a policy priority and ensuring meaningful measures to address these at national level. This way, the European Union strengthens its framework for racial equality and supports its new EU anti-racism action plan. However, implementation, participation and addressing structural forms of racism remain a challenge. We call on the EU institutions and Member States to implement intersectional and structural approach to racism which could ensure strong measures against antigypsyism,” said *Julie Pascoet, Senior advocacy officer, European Network against Racism.*

Signatories:

European Roma Grassroots Organisations (ERGO) Network

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Central Council of German Sinti and Roma

European Roma Information Office (ERIO)

European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)

European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF)

European Network against Racism (ENAR)

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