

Brussels, 7 April 2010

Communication on Roma in Europe and Progress Report on Roma inclusion 2008-2010

What is the new Communication about?

This is the first time the European Commission has adopted a policy Communication dedicated specifically to Roma. The document defines the main challenges ahead and develops an ambitious programme to help make policies for Roma inclusion more effective.

The Communication also outlines the complexity and interdependence of the problems faced by Roma in terms of discrimination, poverty, low educational achievement, labour market barriers, housing segregation and poor health. Finally, it highlights progress made in the past two years at EU and national levels in Roma integration.

How can EU and national policies for Roma inclusion be made more effective?

The Commission is committed to strengthening the impact of the EU Structural Funds (European Social Fund and European Regional Development Fund) in promoting Roma inclusion. Roma issues are taken into account for all relevant policies – employment, social inclusion, cohesion and enlargement.

The Commission also suggests developing a set of model approaches for social and economic integration of Roma to increase the effectiveness of public policy. These approaches would define the most appropriate mix of instruments to deal with the specific problems of Roma communities. Conditions vary depending on whether Roma communities are suburban, rural or mobile or whether they are composed of third country nationals or stateless persons.

What does the EU do for Roma?

The EU and Member States have a joint responsibility for Roma inclusion and use a broad range of instruments and policies in their areas of responsibility.

The main instruments and policies available to the Commission are legislation (non-discrimination Directive 2000/43/EC, freedom of movement Directive 2004/38/EC, Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia 2008/913/JHA); coordination of national policies, e.g. in education, employment, and social inclusion; and funding – namely the European Social Fund (ESF), European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) – to support the implementation of national policies in these fields. Finally, the Commission helps exchange experience and knowledge, such as in the framework of the European Platform for Roma Inclusion, which meets twice a year.

The Platform's main principle is that all Roma policies should aim at integrating Roma into standard schools, labour market and society rather than creating a parallel society. Action should be explicitly targeted towards Roma without excluding people of other ethnicities who are in a similar socio-economic situation.

European Roma Summit (Córdoba, Spain 8-9 April 2010)

What is the European Roma Summit?

The first European Roma Summit took place in Brussels in September 2008. EU institutions, Member States, EU candidate countries and potential candidates as well as civil society organisations discussed Roma communities' situation and how to improve it. The summit's main outcome was the recognition that Roma continue to face discrimination and that policy tools to promote their inclusion must be strengthened.

The second European Roma Summit will take stock of the past two years' achievements. Workshops will focus on the practical implementation of four of the 10 Common Basic Principles for Roma inclusion (discussed at the European Platform for Roma Inclusion and part of the Council conclusions by employment and social affairs ministers of June 2009).

The main Commission inputs to the Summit are:

- the Communication on the social and economic integration of Roma
- a Progress Report on the implementation of the EU instruments and policies for Roma inclusion 2008-2010 (Commission Staff Working Document)

Why is it taking place now?

The Spanish EU Presidency organised the summit on 8 April to mark International Roma Day, which began in 1971. This symbolic timing shows that Roma are an integral part of the history and civilisation of Europe. A cultural event and ceremony to celebrate International Roma Day will be held on the summit's first day.

Why does it only focus on Roma?

The situation of Roma (about 10-12 million people in Europe) is far more difficult than other ethnic minorities. They are highly vulnerable to far-reaching social exclusion and widespread discrimination.

A survey by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency in April 2009 showed that half of Roma respondents had faced discrimination at least once in the previous 12 months. Moreover, between 65% and 100% of Roma, depending on the country surveyed, did not report being victims of a crime to the police; and between 66% and 92% did not report their most recent experience of discrimination.

Who is participating?

About 400 representatives of EU institutions, national governments, regional and local public authorities and civil society (including Roma organisations) will participate.

European Commission Vice-President Reding (Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship) and Commissioner Andor (Employment, Social affairs and Inclusion) will be among the speakers. They will be hosted by the Spanish minister for health and social policy, Trinidad Jiménez García-Herrera. They will be joined by several ministers from EU Member States, candidate countries and potential candidates. George Soros, chairman of the Soros Foundation, and World Bank Director Theodore Ahlers. Livia Járóka, a European Parliament member, will also take part, together with a number of other MEPs. Finally, the direct involvement of Roma organisations and representatives is a key feature of the event.

What will happen at the summit?

Summit participants will discuss a number of issues around Roma inclusion and take stock of the developments of the last two years.

Four parallel workshops will focus on four of the Common Basic Principles for Roma inclusion: good practices and ways to enhance the implementation gap of existing instruments, initiatives and mechanisms.

On the second day, particular attention will be paid to Roma health (one of the most important issues for Roma inclusion and a priority of the Spanish Presidency).

Will the summit launch a European Roma strategy?

The EU provides powerful tools and policies to tackle exclusion and discrimination. In order to apply these instruments and policies effectively, the EU integrates Roma issues into all relevant policies from education to employment and from public health to regional development.

The Communication adopted on 7 April outlines the challenges ahead and possible strategic approaches.

How does the Commission define the term "Roma"?

The Commission uses "Roma" as an umbrella term that includes groups of people who share similar cultural characteristics and a history of segregation in European societies, such as the Roma (who mainly live in Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans), Sinti, Travellers, Kalé etc. The Commission is aware that the extension of the term "Roma" to all these groups is contentious, and it has no intention to "assimilate" the members of these other groups to the Roma themselves in cultural terms.

Websites:

<http://ec.europa.eu/roma>

<http://www.2cumbrokeroma.org>

Video News Release:

<http://www.tvlink.org/mediadetails.php?key=14dd891ef3e6ee4b9e6b&title=Do+we+really+know+the+Roma%3F++International+Roma+Day+raises+the+question&titleleft=Employment>

Publications:

Leaflet – EU Action for the Roma (2009) [leaflet]

Vademecum – The 10 Common Basic Principles for Roma inclusion (2010) [brochure]

Time to change. Ending anti-Roma discrimination in Europe (2008) [DVD]

Roma dreams – Roma reality (2009) [DVD]

all publications are available on the EU Roma web portal