



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 13 May 2011

10025/11

**SOC 395
POLGEN 81
JAI 310
EDUC 92
FREMP 50
COHOM 128
FSTR 19
FC 19
REGIO 39**

NOTE

from: Permanent Representatives Committee (Part I)
to: COUNCIL (Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs)

No. prev. doc.: 9714/11 SOC 385 POLGEN 78 JAI 277 EDUC 88 FREMP 46 COHOM 119
FSTR 17 FC 17 REGIO 36

Subject: An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020
- Draft Council Conclusions

1. On 5 April 2011, the Commission adopted a Communication on "An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020", with the aim of advancing the social and economic inclusion of Roma.
2. The Presidency tabled a set of draft Conclusions on this subject for discussion in the Working Party on Social Questions. At its meeting on 11 May 2011, the Committee of Permanent Representatives reached an agreement on the attached text.

3. The EPSCO Council is invited to adopt the draft Conclusions at its session on 19 May 2011 and to request that they be published in the Official Journal of the European Union.
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**AN EU FRAMEWORK FOR NATIONAL ROMA¹ INTEGRATION² STRATEGIES UP TO
2020
DRAFT COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS**

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

RECALLING:

1. that the European Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, as it follows from Article 2 of the Treaty on the European Union and in particular from Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union;

2. the fact that combating social exclusion, discrimination and inequality is an explicit commitment of the European Union as set out, inter alia, in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union as well as Articles 9 and 10 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;

¹ The term “Roma” is used in line with the definition contained in the Commission’s Communication (8727/11, footnote 1).

² For the purpose of the present Council conclusions, "integration" and "inclusion" both refer to measures for improving the situation of Roma living in the Member States' territories.

3. that Article 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union specifically empowers the Council to take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation; the Council has exercised these powers when adopting Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin;
4. the Presidency Conclusions of the European Council (December 2007³ and June 2008⁴); the Council Conclusions on the Inclusion of the Roma (December 2008⁵); the Council Conclusions on the Inclusion of the Roma and the Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion annexed thereto (June 2009⁶); the Council Conclusions on Advancing Roma Inclusion (June 2010⁷); the European Council Conclusions adopting the Europe 2020 Strategy (June 2010)⁸ and the Council Conclusions on the Fifth report on economic, social and territorial cohesion (February 2011)⁹;
5. the European Parliament Resolutions on the Situation of Roma women in the European Union (June 2006); on the Social situation of the Roma and their improved access to the labour market in the EU (March 2009); on the Situation of the Roma people in Europe (September 2010); and on the EU strategy on Roma inclusion (March 2011);

³ 16616/1/07 REV 1.

⁴ 11018/1/08 REV 1.

⁵ 15976/1/08 REV 1.

⁶ 10394/09 + COR 1.

⁷ 10058/10 + COR 1.

⁸ EUCO 13/1/10 REV 1.

⁹ 6738/11.

6. the Communication of the Commission on the social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe¹⁰, and the accompanying Staff Working Document "Roma in Europe: The Implementation of European Union Instruments and Policies for Roma Inclusion – Progress Report"¹¹;
7. the European Roma Summits which took place in Brussels on 16 September 2008 and in Córdoba on 8 April 2010;
8. the Opinion of the Committee of Regions on the Social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe (December 2010);
9. Regulation (EU) No 437/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010 amending Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 on the European Regional Development Fund as regards the eligibility of housing interventions in favour of marginalised communities¹²;

STRESSES THAT:

10. despite efforts at national, European and international level to advance Roma inclusion, many Roma still face deep poverty, profound social exclusion, barriers in exercising fundamental rights, and discrimination, which often means limited access to quality education, jobs and services, low income levels, sub-standard housing conditions, poor health and lower life expectancy. This situation does not only affect Roma, but also has an economic cost for society as a whole, including through the waste of human capital and loss of productivity;

¹⁰ 8439/10.

¹¹ 8439/10 ADD 1.

¹² OJ L 132, 29.5.2010, p. 1.

11. the size and the social and economic situation of the Roma population are different in each Member State; therefore national approaches to Roma inclusion should be tailored to the specific circumstances and needs on the ground, including by adopting or continuing to pursue policies that address marginalised and disadvantaged groups, such as Roma, in a broader context;
12. the active involvement and participation of Roma themselves is essential for the improvement of their living conditions and for the advancement of their inclusion;
13. the protection of fundamental rights, notably by combating discrimination and segregation, in accordance with existing EU legislation and the international commitments of the Member States, is essential for improving the situation of marginalised communities including Roma;
14. improving the situation of Roma is not only an urgent social priority, but can also strengthen economic growth in the long term; successful inclusion policies will contribute to the Member States' efforts to reach the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy, particularly the headline targets in the fields of employment, education and social inclusion;
15. the Member States have the primary competence for designing and implementing policies aimed at advancing the social and economic inclusion of Roma, and action taken at the EU level should take into consideration the different national circumstances and respect the principle of subsidiarity. Advancing Roma inclusion is also a common concern and interest of the Member States and the EU, and cooperation at EU level brings significant added value, improving competitiveness, productivity and economic growth, as well as social cohesion;

16. socio-economic aspects, and territorial aspects where relevant, should serve as the main basis for designing Roma inclusion policies in key fields such as education, employment, housing and healthcare, in line with the Common Basic Principle of "explicit but not exclusive targeting"¹³ and in accordance with a human rights perspective. Specific measures to prevent or compensate for disadvantages linked to ethnic origin can also be taken;
17. special attention should be paid to the interests and difficulties of Roma women and girls, who face the risk of multiple discrimination, and thus a gender perspective needs to be applied in all policies and actions for advancing Roma inclusion;
18. there is an urgent need to stop the inter-generational transmission of poverty and social exclusion; with this in mind, the situation of Roma children needs to be improved from the earliest possible age in order to allow them to fulfil their potential. Education and training, with special attention to the gender perspective, as well as close cooperation with families have a crucial role to play in this;

WELCOMES:

19. the Communication of the Commission on an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020¹⁴, which invites Member States to adopt or develop further a comprehensive approach to Roma inclusion, and encourages them to set achievable national goals in the fields of education, employment, healthcare and housing, as well as to put in place a monitoring mechanism and make existing EU funds more accessible for Roma inclusion projects, in accordance with the size and the social and economic situation of the Roma population living in their territories and taking into account the different national circumstances;

¹³ Common Basic Principle 2.

¹⁴ 8727/11.

INVITES THE MEMBER STATES:

20. to improve the social and economic situation of Roma by pursuing a mainstreaming approach in the fields of education, employment, housing, and healthcare, taking into account, where appropriate, the Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion, as well as by ensuring equal access to quality services, and to apply an integrated approach to these policies and make the best use of the funds and resources available;
21. to set or continue working towards their goals, in accordance with the Member States' policies, in the fields of education, employment, healthcare and housing with a view to closing the gaps between marginalised Roma communities and the general population. Particular attention should be paid to the need to ensure equal access in practice. The goals could focus on the following priority areas, paying special attention to the gender dimension:
- (a) access to quality education, including early childhood education and care, as well as primary, secondary and higher education, with particular reference to the elimination of possible segregation at school, the prevention of early school leaving and ensuring successful transitions from school to employment;
 - (b) access to employment, with particular reference to non-discriminatory access to the labour market, as well as active labour market policies, labour market programmes, adult education and vocational training, and support for self-employment;

- (c) access to healthcare, with particular reference to quality healthcare including preventive healthcare and health education; and
 - (d) access to housing, with particular reference to social housing and the need to promote housing desegregation, and making full use of the financing that has recently become available in the context of the European Regional Development Fund¹⁵;
22. to prepare, update or develop their national Roma inclusion strategies, or integrated sets of policy measures within their broader social inclusion policies, for improving the situation of Roma, by the end of 2011, taking into account their specific circumstances, as well as to consider the need to advance the social and economic inclusion of Roma when designing, implementing and monitoring their National Reform Programmes in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy;
 23. to appropriately monitor and evaluate the impact of the Roma inclusion strategies or integrated sets of measures as referred to in paragraph 22;
 24. to ensure, where appropriate, that available EU funds are used in line with national, regional and local Roma inclusion policies;
 25. to identify and implement necessary measures for improving access to and ensuring the effective use of EU funds for the social and economic inclusion of Roma, including, for example, modification of operational programmes, making greater use of technical assistance and improving the predictability of financing by increasing the duration of projects and maximising the uptake of funds;

¹⁵ OJ L 132, 29.5.2010, p. 1.

26. to promote desegregation in all policies and to avoid reproducing segregation, so as to overcome this problem in the long term;
27. to appoint a National Contact Point or use an already existing body in order to ensure effective monitoring of the Roma inclusion strategies or integrated sets of measures as referred to in paragraph 22 and to foster the exchange of good practices and discussions on evidence-based approaches in the area of Roma inclusion policies;
28. to promote the active involvement of Roma civil society and all other stakeholders, including at the regional and local levels, in policies to advance Roma inclusion;

INVITES THE COMMISSION:

29. to continue the work of the Roma Task Force, so as to mainstream Roma inclusion within EU policies and assess the role of EU funds in efforts to advance Roma inclusion in the EU as well as in the context of enlargement policy, thereby also fostering the exchange of best practices and contributing to the discussions on the future of the EU financial instruments and their more effective use;
30. to pursue rigorous monitoring of the implementation of Council Directive 2000/43/EC which is a powerful instrument for combating discrimination based on ethnic origin;
31. to appropriately assess the success of Member States' Roma inclusion policies in accordance with their respective approaches, and within existing coordination mechanisms such as the Open Method of Coordination;

INVITES THE COMMISSION AND THE MEMBER STATES, in close cooperation and in accordance with their respective competences:

32. to consider mainstreaming the fight against segregation and extreme poverty, as well as the promotion of equal opportunities for marginalised communities, including Roma, across all relevant policy areas, including in the context of the EU funds, and based on clear and verifiable criteria;
33. to ensure that the various EU funds available work together in a more integrated and flexible manner in the future, providing an appropriate framework for integrated, long-term actions for advancing Roma inclusion;
34. to improve the implementation and strengthen the effectiveness of EU funds used in favour of marginalised and disadvantaged groups including Roma, notably through the assessment of results;
35. where appropriate, to identify the main socio-economic factors characterising the territorial concentration of marginalised and disadvantaged groups including Roma in order to map these territories, and use relevant policies to improve the situation;
36. to enhance cooperation between relevant stakeholders in order to facilitate the exchange of best practices and mutual learning regarding evidence-based policies and successful methods, including by extending and improving existing networks and initiatives such as the EU Roma Network and the high-level events organised by the Commission;

37. to strengthen the role of the European Platform for Roma Inclusion, thereby intensifying the exchange of good practices and discussions on national policies between the Member States and cooperation with civil society; to strengthen the role of the Commission in the preparation and running of the Platform as well as in ensuring its continuity; and to ensure that its results are fed into policy developments both at EU and national level;
38. to draw on the experience of international organisations such as the Council of Europe¹⁶ and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe as well as international initiatives such as the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015;
39. to advance the social and economic inclusion of Roma by guaranteeing their legal rights, especially those of Roma victims of human trafficking, by intensifying the fight against human trafficking by making full use of instruments available at the EU level, including the recently adopted Directive 2011/36/EU¹⁷;
40. to foster positive changes in attitudes towards Roma by improving public awareness of Roma culture and identity and combating stereotypes, xenophobia and racism;
41. to promote the empowerment, active involvement and necessary participation of Roma themselves, at all levels of policy development, decision-making and implementation of measures, including by raising awareness of their rights and duties, as well as to consolidate the capacity of Roma NGOs and encourage the better involvement of civil society and all other stakeholders.

¹⁶ See, in particular, "the Strasbourg Declaration on Roma":
<https://wcd.coe.int/wcd/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1691607&Site=CM>

¹⁷ OJ L 101, 15.4.2011, p. 1.