

Romanian Parliament
Chamber of Deputies

1/3245/v8

1 November 2013

Opinion
**on the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on effective Roma
integration measures in the Member States**

COM(2013) 460

Having regard to the Treaty of Lisbon, in particular Articles 5 and 12 of the Treaty on European Union and Protocols 1 and 2 thereto,

Having regard to the Romanian Constitution, as republished, and in particular Article 148 thereof,

Having regard to Decision No 11/2011 of the Chamber of Deputies,

Taking into account the draft opinion adopted by the Chamber of Deputies' Committee for Human Rights, Religious Affairs and Minorities at its meeting of 15 October 2013,

Taking into account the draft opinion adopted by the Chamber of Deputies' Committee for Employment and Social Protection at its meeting of 8 October 2013,

Taking into account the position of the Romanian Government, expressed through the Government Memorandum of 9 September 2013,

Taking into account the final draft opinion adopted by the Committee for European Affairs at its meeting of 22 October 2013,

Having regard to the approval given by the Permanent Office of the Chamber of Deputies on 28 October 2013,

The Chamber of Deputies, in accordance with Article 40 of Decision No 11/2011 of the Chamber of Deputies of 19 April 2011, hereby adopts this **opinion**.

The Chamber:

1. notes that this proposal for a Council recommendation is aimed at accelerating progress and thus focuses the Member States' attention on practical measures that are crucially important for implementing their strategies efficiently and quickly;
2. recalls that on 5 April 2011 the Commission proposed Communication COM(2011) 173: an EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020. The European Council approved this framework in June 2011, demonstrating the EU's political will to tackle the Roma's situation;

3. recalls that, in May 2011, the Chamber of Deputies of the Romanian Parliament adopted an opinion on that Communication from the European Commission. The opinion included the views of the Committee for Human Rights, Religious Affairs and Minorities (including those of the Parliamentary Sub-committee for Roma), the Committee for Employment and Social Protection, the Committee for Health and Family, the Committee for Education, Science, Youth and Sport and the Committee for Culture, Arts and Mass-Media, and was adopted by the Chamber of Deputies. The opinion endorses the idea that the Roma can be considered a European minority and that the Roma issue needs therefore to be tackled at European level, with Roma needing to be integrated throughout the territory of the EU, and the need to draw up specific strategies and programmes for Roma citizens, adopted through specific documents and separate from strategies and programmes intended for vulnerable groups in general, given both the specific nature of the problems involved and the necessity for representatives of Roma civil society organisations to participate in drawing up the strategies and programmes;
4. recalls that, in its response to the opinion of the Chamber of Deputies [C(2011)8138 of 16 November 2011], the European Commission distanced itself from the position of the Romanian Parliament's Chamber of Deputies by emphasising that the main responsibility for integrating the Roma population economically and socially lay with the Member States, particularly Member States of origin;
5. notes that the proposal reinforces the EU framework with a non-binding legal instrument so that it is easier for Member States to give practical expression to their commitments by choosing the best means for attaining the objectives set;
6. considers that the practical integration measures correspond to the four areas of action of the Council's Conclusions of 2011, namely education, employment, health and housing; that, by attaching greater importance to having measures funded and by including the subject of Roma integration in partnership contracts, the 2014-2020 multiannual framework is adhered to; and that, by improving the institutional framework through enhancing the roles accorded to local planning, to bodies for combating discrimination and to national contact points for Roma integration strategies, contributions are made to combating discrimination and segregation, reducing poverty and increasing Roma participation in the life of the community;
7. acknowledges that recourse to the Recommendation for best practices for strengthening Roma integration may add value and recommends including feasible measures in the operative parts of the programmes;
8. concurs with the position expressed in the Recommendation that application of the general principles intended to ensure the transparent and adequate allocation of funds (not only EU funds but also national and local funds) for Roma integration represents a condition of the programmes' success;
9. agrees to the measures recommended to the Member States, which need to:
 - implement, at regional and local level, measures for combating Roma segregation;
 - guarantee that, in the event of forced evictions, not only will the *acquis communautaire* be complied with in full but also international human rights obligations and, in particular, obligations arising from the European Convention on Human Rights;
 - implement measures to combat discrimination against Roma in society, in particular through: (a) measures for making Roma communities and the general

public aware of the advantages of Roma integration; (b) measures for making the general public aware of the multicultural nature of societies, with these considerations being included in school programmes and educational material, as appropriate;

- combat the discrimination, including multiple discrimination, with which children and women of Roma ethnicity are faced, through the implementation by national authorities of legislation on underage marriages, the combating of forced marriages and the prohibition of begging involving children;
 - combat poverty and social exclusion affecting the Roma population through investment in human capital and through social cohesion policies;
 - consider Roma integration as a key aspect of national reform programmes in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy, having taken account of the size of the Roma population on their territory;
 - support the activities and institutional capacity of bodies designed to promote equality of treatment, granting them resources adequate for them to be able to offer legal assistance and legal aid, as well as support, to persons of Roma ethnicity who are victims of discrimination;
 - develop projects and bilateral or multilateral agreements in order to provide solutions to the problems connected with Roma's cross-border mobility within the European Union and in order to support mutual learning and the multiplication of good practices, for example by means of cooperation between authorities managing structural funds, with a view to designing effective Roma integration interventions;
10. recognises that responsibility for Roma integration needs to devolve primarily upon national public authorities but reiterates its view that the Roma can be considered a European minority or, more correctly, a European ethnicity and that, consequently, the Roma issue needs to be dealt with at European level;
11. points out that Roma ethnicity can be treated as a European ethnicity because Roma have the following characteristics: they speak Romani, a language that is part of the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European family of languages, being similar to Indian languages such as Hindi; they do not have their own state; and they have maintained the same traditions for hundreds of years, irrespective of the countries in which they have lived and the way of life – sedentary or nomadic – they have led;
12. considers that strengthening the framework for integrating Roma is clearly in Romania's interests and wants the issues surrounding integration to be kept on the European Union's active agenda as a problem of special interest, free from the negative connotations of, for example, 'migration' between EU Member States;
13. makes clear that the Romanian government's 2010-2020 strategy for integrating Romanian citizens belonging to the Roma minority is to be amended once the process of administrative decentralisation, now under way in Romania, has been finalised;
14. points out that the social and economic integration of the Roma is a two-way

process requiring a change of mentality on the part both of citizens comprising the majority and of citizens of Roma ethnicity.

This opinion is addressed to the presidents of, respectively, the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission, as well as to the Romanian government.

PRESIDENT

Valeriu Ștefan Zgonea