



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Camera Deputaților for its Opinion concerning the Proposal for a Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States {COM (2013) 460 final}.

The Commission appreciates the constructive attitude of the Camera Deputaților towards the proposal and the support of Romania in adopting the Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States, adopted by the EPSCO Council on 9/10 December 2013.

The Commission shares the concern expressed as regards the need to further strengthen the framework on Roma integration and the need of further action.

Roma integration is not only a moral duty, but in the interest of Member States, especially for those like Romania with a large Roma minority. Roma represent a significant and growing proportion of the school age population and the future workforce. Efficient labour activation policies and individualised and accessible support services for Roma job seekers are crucial to allow Roma people to realise their human capital and to actively and equally participate in the economy and society.

In this context, the proposal from the Commission for the next programming period 2014-2020 illustrates the commitment to ensure that EU funds will be available to support the implementation of national Roma integration strategies, in line with the Europe 2020 Strategy. The proposal from the Commission supports specifically the integration of Roma and stresses the importance of using an integrated approach to this issue. The European Social Fund will include in its new programming period a specific investment priority for the integration of marginalized communities, including Roma.

At the same time, the Commission recognises that the effectiveness of programmes and easier access to these funds by the target groups should be encouraged. For better access to these funds, the new rules proposed by the Commission envisage a significant reduction in the administrative burden for beneficiaries. These rules also provide guarantees for the effective involvement of all stakeholders, a prerequisite for the success of programmes for Roma integration.

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The objectives that have been set in 2011 by the European Framework for Roma integration are common to all Member States. However, depending on the starting point of each Member State and the state of play of the gap between the Roma and the rest of the population, the nature of the efforts to be made by Member States will vary. The Commission is in continuous contact with the authorities of Member States, particularly those who face the biggest challenges in relation to Roma inclusion.

Member States which have the most significant Roma populations have also received specific recommendations within the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Hence, the funding priorities in the Partnership Agreements for the next funding period should be in line with these recommendations. The negotiations on these agreements are still on-going.

The Commission set up in October 2012 the network of National Contact Points for the integration of Roma, specifically with the intention to encourage transnational cooperation, including between countries of origin and countries of residence of Roma EU citizens. The issue of transnational cooperation at the national level, but also at the local level in particular, was discussed. In this context, the Commission expresses its satisfaction that this aspect of its proposal is already taking shape and supports the cooperation projects being set up between several Romanian and French local and regional authorities (i.e.: Tinca and Grand Lyon, Grenoble and Alba Iulia, Lille and Baia Mare, etc.). It is important that they start yielding the expected results.

The Commission stresses that, in the field of Roma integration it is primarily for the Member States to implement the national strategies or integrated sets of policy measures they have set.

The Commission supports the Opinion of the Camera Deputaţilor that the integration of Roma is a two-way process, which requires the involvement of both the Roma community and the rest of society. The Commission is already working closely with several associations representing the Roma in the European Union and is also encouraging awareness-raising and sensitisation of the society to Roma issues.

The Commission appreciates the efforts of Romania in its 2010-2020 Strategy on Roma integration, as well as its support to the EU Roma inclusion process and participation in the network of the National Roma Contact Points.

As the Camera Deputaţilor surely is aware, the Council of Ministers of the European Union has agreed, on 9 December 2013, a Council Recommendation on the integration of Roma communities. The Council Recommendation was adopted unanimously by ministers meeting in the Council less than six months after the Commission's proposal. It is the first ever EU-level legal instrument for Roma inclusion. With the adoption of the Recommendation Member States commit to taking targeted action to bridge the gaps between the Roma and the rest of the population. Member States are now expected to put concrete measures into practice to make a difference for Roma people on the ground. The Commission counts on the commitment and efforts of the Camera Deputaţilor to help ensuring that the concrete measures are put into practice by the Government.

Finally, the Commission would be very pleased if a high-level participation of Romania could be ensured in the Roma summit. This meeting, taking place on 4 April 2014, will be hosted in Brussels by Vice-President Viviane Reding and Commissioner Laszlo Andor.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the concerns raised by the Camera Deputaților and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Maroš Šefčovič
Vice-President*