



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President

The Commission would like to thank the Senat for its Opinion on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions assessing the implementation of the European Union Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and the Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States – 2016 {COM(2016) 424 final}.

This fifth annual Communication assesses progress made in implementing the European Union Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. It also reviews, for the first time, Roma integration measures put in place under the Council Recommendation.

The Commission thanks the Senat for its support for the Communication and for its political commitment and support to the European Union Roma inclusion process in general.

The Commission fully agrees with the Senat when it emphasises that the Roma community has the highest risk of social exclusion and that the social integration of the Roma is a process that must be included in all the areas of activity on the agenda of all local and central public institutions.

The Commission notes that the Senat believes that the current policies in Romania, as part of its new national Roma integration strategy are really promising and work well, notably in the area of education.

The Commission also notes that, according to the Senat, Romania still faces numerous important challenges notably with regard to: combating discrimination, hate speech and hate crime, fighting poverty, particularly among children, combating violence against Roma women, preventing segregation in education, encouraging the participation of the Roma in the labour market, improving access to medical services and combating segregation in housing and forced evictions.

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The Commission would like to recall that discrimination and prejudice against Roma is directly addressed in the Council Recommendation of 9 December 2013 on effective Roma integration measures in the Member States¹. The Recommendation underlines the importance of the practical enforcement of Directive 2000/43 which is the Directive prohibiting race discrimination and draws the attention of the Member States to make use of the relevant case law of the European Court of Human Rights, as additional reference to identify illegal provisions and practices. The Recommendation also requests specific measures from the Member States to combat anti-Gypsyism, like awareness raising, addressing the problems Roma face in education curricula and teaching materials and taking measures to combat anti-Roma rhetoric. In addition, the Council conclusions of 8 December 2016 on Accelerating the Process of Roma Integration² specifically refer to anti-Gypsyism, as a root cause of social exclusion and discrimination.

The Council Framework Decision on racism and xenophobia is the tool to fight against hate speech and hate crimes based on ethnic origin. In June 2016, the Commission set up a High Level Group on combatting racism and xenophobia and other forms of intolerance such as the fight against hate speech, hate crime as well as specific forms of hatred including anti-Gypsyism. Protecting Roma women and children is a political priority for the Commission. The Commission in cooperation with the Council of Europe, launched a joint programme (JUSTROM) on "Access to justice of Romani women" focusing on five Member States including Romania.

The Commission would equally like to recall that under the 2013 Council Recommendation, the point of the national approaches 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, remains valid.

Finally, the Commission would like to underline the importance of the dialogue with the Senat and is looking forward to further cooperation especially in the context of the mid-term review of the European Union Framework and the process of development of a proposal for the post-2020 period.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Věra Jourová
Member of the Commission*

¹ OJ C 378, 24.12.2013, p. 1–7.

² <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-15406-2016-INIT/en/pdf>