



EUROPEAN UNION

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EU Statement on International Roma Day

8 April marks the International Roma Day, the date of the first international meeting of Roma representatives across Europe, which took place in the United Kingdom on 8 April 1971. This year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of this First World Romani Congress.

While celebrating the rich culture, history and heritage of the Roma and Sinti persons, we take stock of the multiple challenges they continue to face.

Across the OSCE region, during the Covid-19 pandemic, excluded and disadvantaged Roma and Sinti persons suffered severe negative health and socio-economic impacts, which are likely to further exacerbate the pre-existing inequalities and the risk of poverty and social exclusion. We echo the ODIHR Director Matteo Mecacci that this is the time to pay more attention to vulnerable communities such as the Roma and Sinti. We express our support for his call on governments to increase efforts to counter prejudice against Roma and Sinti and support communities that the pandemic continues to hit hard.

More efforts are needed by the OSCE participating States to reduce structural inequalities faced by Roma and Sinti persons, such as limited access to sanitary infrastructure and healthcare services, including vaccination services and lack of facilities and digital skills that would enable them to actively participate in society, including in distance education.

Participating States should take further steps to encourage and enhance participation of Roma and Sinti persons in public and political life. ODIHR's *Nicolae Gheorghe Roma Leadership Academy* designed to strengthen the participants' knowledge about democratic governance and facilitate a deeper understanding of the roles and opportunities for young Roma and Sinti in elected and appointed positions, as well as in civil society, is a good initiative in this respect.

The European Union commends the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues for its dedicated efforts in advancing the implementation of the OSCE *Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area*. We will continue to support the CPRSI activities to build inclusive, cohesive, diverse and strong societies.

Participating States need to focus on combating and preventing discrimination, including by tackling antigypsyism, which exacerbates exclusion, and to raise awareness about these issues. Efforts should be consolidated in order to adopt and implement measures to fight multiple forms of discrimination against Roma and Sinti persons, and in particular Roma and Sinti women.

The European Union welcomes the adoption by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) of a legally non-binding working definition of antigypsyism /anti-Roma discrimination on 8 October 2020.

The European Union remains firmly engaged in ensuring respect and protection for fundamental rights, including equal treatment and equal opportunities, to fostering social and economic inclusion on all levels. Close and strong partnerships with civil society organizations and the involvement of Roma and Sinti persons are intrinsically linked to these processes.

At EU level, an ambitious Roma Strategic Framework and on 12 March 2021 the Recommendation for Roma equality, inclusion and participation was adopted. This includes comprehensive lists of measures to combat discrimination and antigypsyism, advance social inclusion, promote participation of Roma in society and ensure equal access to quality mainstream education, employment, health and housing throughout Europe.

We take this opportunity to reiterate our calls for full implementation of all OSCE commitments regarding Roma and Sinti persons and our firm engagement in this respect.

The Candidate Countries REPUBLIC of NORTH MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, GEORGIA, ANDORRA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

* Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.