



**EUROPEAN UNION**

**OSCE Permanent Council No 994  
Vienna, 10 April 2014**

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**EU Statement on International Roma Day**

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1. On the occasion of International Roma Day, celebrated on 8 April, the European Union reiterates its call for continued resolute efforts at the highest political level for the inclusion of Roma and Sinti.
2. As the 2013 Status Report on the Implementation of the OSCE Action Plan underlined, the adoption of Council Conclusions on a Framework for the National Roma Integration Strategies by the European Council in 2011 during the Hungarian Presidency was an important step in the process of strengthening the EU agenda on Roma. It has contributed to a change in the approach to Roma inclusion by developing a comprehensive and evidence-based framework linked to the Europa 2020 strategy, as well as by coordinating the Member States' efforts. EU Member States have elaborated and are currently implementing Roma inclusion strategies or sets of policy measures within their broader social inclusion policies. These policies target in particular improving access to education, employment, healthcare and housing. Specific targets and monitoring mechanisms can contribute to the effective implementation of these strategies. The European Union also adopted in December last year a Council Recommendation on Roma integration in the Member States.
3. The European Commission has now produced a report assessing the implementation of the EU Framework. It was presented last week at the third European Roma Summit which took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2014. The report underlined that efforts to improve the lives of Roma population within the EU have

already delivered visible results, but progress still needs to be done in some areas.

4. The European Union commends the work of OSCE institutions, notably the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues and the High Commissioner on National Minorities, for their dedicated efforts in advancing the implementation of the OSCE commitments and assisting participating States to this end. We also welcome increased dialogue and cooperation between ODIHR and the European Union on these issues.
5. Last year we marked ten years since the adoption of the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti. It remains a milestone document for the OSCE on Roma and Sinti issues. We welcome the adoption of the Ministerial Decision in December 2013 in Kyiv focusing on improving the situation of Roma and Sinti women, youth and children. This decision benefited from two useful special events on Roma and Sinti in 2013. The first was the Special Day at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting on the Empowerment of Roma Women. The second was the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting in November dedicated to discussing the implementation of the Action Plan and to identifying current and possible future challenges. The Status Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan prepared by ODIHR accurately highlighted some visible progress has been achieved, while challenges still persist throughout the OSCE area. The findings of the report give guidance of the further challenges and how to meet them.
6. The implementation of commitments remains at the core of EU actions in the OSCE also with regard to the improvement of the situation of Roma and Sinti. On this occasion, we reiterate our calls for full implementation of all OSCE commitments regarding Roma and Sinti, and in particular for further efforts to eradicate racist and xenophobic discourse. Such rhetoric seriously damages social inclusion efforts. In this regard we support further efforts to improve the cooperation between relevant authorities and Roma and Sinti communities.

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

\* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.