



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. It represents both a celebratory moment at international level of the rich culture, history and heritage of the Roma and Sinti persons and yet another opportunity to raise awareness and to take stock of the problems they continue to face. This reflection should not just occur once a year, since Roma and Sinti persons are confronted with daily harassment, discrimination and lack of social opportunities.

The European Union and its Member States remain firmly engaged in ensuring respect and protection for fundamental rights, including equal treatment and equal opportunities, fostering social and economic inclusion on all levels, European, national and local. Close and strong partnerships with civil society organizations and involvement of Roma and Sinti persons are key.

In this respect, participating States should take further steps to encourage and enhance participation of Roma and Sinti persons in public and political life and to actively support the empowerment of Roma and Sinti women and youth.

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 welcome the Third Status Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area which also reflects the valuable input from the civil society organizations. We will continue to support the CPRSI

activities related to the participation of Roma and Sinti, including women and youth, in public and political life in order to build inclusive, cohesive and strong societies.

This cannot be achieved without enhanced efforts to fight racism, intolerance, xenophobia, populism and hate speech. We reiterate that officials and political leaders should refrain from inflammatory rhetoric and propagation of stereotypes. In this regard, we echo the concerns expressed by the Director of ODIHR regarding hate-motivated attacks and violence that are often fuelled by racist and anti-Roma rhetoric promoted by high-level public officials. We also join her call on participating States to promptly condemn racism and incitement to hatred.

At EU level, we are guided by the *EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies*. A recent evaluation by the European Commission, followed by the *High Level Conference on the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies*, organized by the Romanian Presidency, on 4-5 March 2019, indicated that the Framework is the beginning of a process. We have seen positive results and an initial change in trends, however, limitations remain and further steps are needed. The Bucharest conference also concluded that more time is needed to consolidate working structures, further align and mobilise other policy, legal and financial instruments and better monitor the impact of policies.

The full implementation of all OSCE commitments continues to be one of the EU's guiding principles. 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 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 and LIECHTENSTEIN members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA, ARMENIA, GEORGIA and SAN MARINO align themselves with this statement.

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