



European Roma Information Office

ERIO Newsletter

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NEWS

8 April, International Roma Day: Statement by Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland



By Council of Europe

In a statement ahead of the International Roma Day marked on 8 April, [Council of Europe Secretary General](#) Thorbjørn Jagland urges European political parties to sign a pledge to improve the political representation of Roma and Traveller women.

"Over 12 million Roma and Travellers live in Council of Europe member States and yet their political activity - both in terms of participation and representation - is nearly invisible.

Read more [here](#).

Despite some progress, marginalized Roma community still most excluded in Western Balkans



By UNDP

More marginalized Roma girls and boys are attending compulsory education in the Western Balkans than ever before. However, when compared to their non-Roma neighbours, Roma people face twice as high unemployment, and are less likely to see a doctor when needed or go to bed on a full stomach. That is, according to a new survey supported by the European Commission, and implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank.

Read more [here](#).

'It's a vicious cycle': One in three Roma people in EU states are victims of harassment



By thejournal.ie

THE ROMA COMMUNITY in the European Union face the basic challenges of poor sanitation, hunger and youth unemployment on a daily basis, according to a new report.

The report, published by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), said the findings underline the persistent inequalities that have long plagued Europe's Roma community in many counties.

Anti-gypsyism remains high with one out of three Roma people being victims of harassment.

Read more [here](#).

US Embassy kicks off International Roma Day with a football tournament



By The Slovak Spectator

The US Embassy continued in tradition and commemorated International Roma Day on April 6 with its fourth annual football tournament. A total of six teams, composed of Roma youth, politicians, journalists, and diplomats from the US, Canadian, British, Dutch, Norwegian, and Swedish Embassies competed in the match aimed at dispelling stereotypes and portraying Roma culture in a positive light in Slovakia.

Read more [here](#).

Living Library



By Council of Europe

On Monday 9 April 2018, the Roma and Travellers Team proudly presents a variety of Roma living books entitled 'Living narratives – come and meet the Roma' in commemoration of 8 April, International Roma Day.

The Living library is designed to build a positive framework for conversations that can challenge stereotypes and prejudices through dialogue. The Living Library is a place where real people are “on loan” to “readers”. A place where difficult questions are expected, appreciated and answered.

Read more [here](#).

UK Gypsy camp review criticised for fuelling prejudice



By The Guardian

Leading human rights groups have criticised a government review of the laws surrounding unauthorised Gypsy and Traveller camps for reinforcing prejudice against nomadic communities.

Last week the housing minister, Dominic Raab, announced a consultation on the powers available to local authorities, the police and landowners to deal with Gypsies and Travellers who settle on land without permission. The announcement came following calls by MPs in October for increased eviction powers.

Read more [here](#).

Report on the fourth meeting of the EU High Level Group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance



On April 9, 2018, the [High Level Group](#) published a report on the fourth meeting on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance. The meeting, which was held in Brussels, gathered various stakeholders from the Member States, European institutions, NGOs and representatives of the civil society.

Member states reported on their progress made in terms of responses to hate crime at national level and the need for more recording and collecting data on hate crime was emphasized. Hate speech online was also identified as a key issue and the importance of consolidating and stabilising the promising results in this area was stressed.

Part of the discussion focussed on issues linked to anti-gypsyism. Concerning these, Commissioner Věra Jourová expressed her grave concerns over the persisting situation of poverty and social exclusion of Roma in many Member States, and the many reported episodes of racist attacks and hate speech against Roma, pointing to the responsibility of Member States' authorities to step up their efforts to effectively address these issues. Roma still face severe barriers in access to basic services such as health, housing, employment and education where the practice of segregated institutions still persist.

To tackle these issues, participants once again stressed the importance of having a comprehensive approach made up of coherent but also diversified legislative and policy responses to

discrimination, exclusion, prejudice, stereotyping and manifestations of intolerance, taking into account the specific challenges faced by different communities and groups and building on solid data to understand trends and challenges. As part of this strategy, several instruments are already in place such as the [EU action on promoting integration and combating discrimination and racism against Roma](#), and the many [Council of Europe initiatives](#) in this area.

Separate conclusions papers relating to the thematic discussions held on Antigypsyism and on Afrophobia will be circulated in the coming weeks on the [webpage](#) of the High Level Group.

Human Rights Committee publishes its observations on Hungary



On April 5, 2018, the Human Rights Committee, a UN body whose task is to monitor the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by its State parties, published its [observations on the sixth periodic report of Hungary](#).

Concerning Roma exclusion, the report stresses that despite “various strategies and programmes to improve the situation of the Roma community and the progress made in certain areas such as school attendance by Roma children, the Committee is concerned about reports that the Roma community continue to suffer from widespread discrimination and exclusion, unemployment, housing and educational segregation”. The apparent progress in education notably hide the fact that there has been a rise in segregation in schools as the “number of Roma children placed in schools for children with mild disabilities remains disproportionately high”. UNHRC calls the Hungarian government to eradicate segregation of Roma children in schools.

Overall further efforts from the Hungarian government are needed “to promote non-discriminatory access to opportunities and services in all fields for members of the Roma community.”

Increased visibility has led to a serious drop in prejudice against the Roma



By Hurriyet Daily News

Prejudice against the Roma still continues, but there have been significant changes in society’s negative perceptions towards them, according to Turkey’s first Roma parliamentarian. Despite positive changes in perceptions, access to education, shelter, and employment remain key problems, said Özcan Purçu, a member of the opposition Republican People’s Party (CHP).

Read more [here](#).

Gypsy site near Canterbury expanding



By Kent Online

The expansion of a gypsy and traveller site on the outskirts of Canterbury has been approved. Councillors voted by a margin of nine to six to grant permission to increase the number of pitches at Brotherhood Wood, off the A2 near Dunkirk, at a meeting of Swale Borough Council's planning committee on tonight.

The number of pitches will rise from 29 to 40 and the total number of caravans permitted will jump from 42 to 87, making the site one of England's largest. A raft of objections were raised at tonight's meeting, many referencing allegations supported by police and Swale Borough Council that the site is already over-occupied and many of its residents are not travellers or gypsies, but migrant workers who are not permitted to live there.

Read more [here](#).

The decision on the merits ERTF v. France, No. 119/2015, is now public



By Council of Europe

The decision of the European Committee of Social Rights on the merits of the complaint European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF) v. France (No. 119/2015) became public on 16 April 2018.

The European Committee of Social Rights adopted its decision on the merits on 5 December 2017.

The Committee's conclusions can be found [here](#), and the full decision can be read [here](#).

Major national traveller survey publishes connacht findings



By Galway Bay FM

The Connacht findings of a major national Traveller survey on issues such as education, health and culture have been published this afternoon. The survey was carried out by Behaviors and Attitudes Market Research in association with a national committee of Traveller organisations.

Key areas of focus for the study were health, education, identity, accommodation, employment, Traveller culture and relationships with the settled community.

It aimed to analyze not just the attitudes of Travellers to these topics – but also the perception of Travellers by Irish adults.

Read more about the findings [here](#).

Celebrating Romani art and culture at the first Roma Biennale



By Apollo Magazine

‘Is it in Berlin or Rome?’ So a friend asked me when I told him I’d be participating in the first Roma Biennale, which took place in the German capital earlier this month. For the Romani population of Europe – which numbers between 10 and 12 million, or more than twice the population of Ireland – even apparently simple issues around nomenclature can be fiendishly hard to unpick.

Read more [here](#).

Ireland's last Traveller secondary school told to close its doors due to lack of funding



By JOE

St Thomas' Special School in Coolock, Dublin has been recently notified that its funding will be cut, leading to its imminent closure this June.

Parents, students and teachers at the school, of which all 33 students are Travellers, have expressed great frustration with the sudden closure.

St Thomas' is currently the last segregated Traveller secondary school of its kind in Ireland.

Read more [here](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND EVENTS

Council of Europe contributes to EU Roma Week 2018



By Council of Europe

The Council of Europe substantially contributed to the EU Roma Week, held at the European Parliament in Brussels from 8 to 12 April 2018. Various speakers, including Thorsten Afflerbach, Head of Division for the Roma and Travellers Team, addressed the participants of the various events.

Read more [here](#).

Report on the fourth meeting of the EU High Level Group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance



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European Roots and Shoots conference in Brussels



On April 25, 2018, the European Organisation of Social Community Theater, [Caravan Next](#), is organising a Conference hosted by the European Committee of the Regions in Brussels, entitled *European Roots and Shoots – Art moves Cities*. The conference is organized by the Caravan Next lead partner Nordisk Teaterlaboratorium – Odin Teatret.



The concept of Social Community Theater is to use art and theatre to promote community empowerment. This conference is part of a running series of ten conferences in the frame of the European Social Community Theatre Project Caravan Next, co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme. These conferences aim at spreading inspiration, tools and knowledge about social community.

Various speakers such as **Barbara Gessler** and **Pedro Velázquez** from Creative Europe, **Natalie Giorgadze** from Culture Action Europe and **Julia Varley** from Odin Teatret will succeed to present different angles on how European cultural projects move cities and citizens – in the past, present and future.

More information can be found [here](#).

Conference in Athens: Strengthening Roma networks at the local and regional level



By Council of Europe

A conference on initiatives for strengthening Roma networks at local and regional levels was co-organised by the Congress and the Association of Greek municipalities (KEDE) in Athens, Greece, on 12 April 2018. Chaired by Michail ANGELOPOULOS (Greece, EPP/CCE), Vice-President of the Congress and Mayor of Samos, this event focused on the specific situation in Greece and on how the Congress could assist with the reconstruction and extension of the current Greek Roma Network.

Read more [here](#).