



European Roma Information Office

ERIO's Recommendations to the Finnish Presidency

July – December 2019

Finland takes over the Presidency of the Council of the EU in July 2019, following the European elections and at a time of renewal for the Commission. The Presidency is expected to play a key role in influencing this beginning of term. As an anti-discrimination European network, we call on the Presidency to commit to Roma's inclusion and ensure that their rights are guaranteed and respected by taking into consideration the following recommendations.

1) Protect minorities' rights and emphasise the fight against anti-Gypsyism

ERIO welcomes the commitment of the Presidency to the respect of human rights and the *"rights of persons belonging to minorities"* and calls on the Presidency to put special emphasis on Roma as they are the most disadvantaged European minority. ERIO wants to stress the need to focus on the fight against anti-Gypsyism as it is still one of the biggest barriers to Roma inclusion. We encourage the Presidency to take a strong stand against this particular form of racism. In order to do so, the Presidency should take note and act on the European Commission [report](#) *on the evaluation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020* and on the European Parliament's [Resolution](#) *on the need for a strengthened post-2020 Strategic EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and stepping up the fight against anti-Gypsyism*. Both of these documents underline the importance of including the fight against anti-Gypsyism at the core of the EU Strategic Framework. Nevertheless, considering the shortcomings of soft law, the current hostile political environment and the fact that the progress achieved so far are still very limited, ERIO calls on the Presidency to bring back the debate on the adoption of a directive on Roma integration focusing both on inclusion and on anti-Gypsyism.

2) Focus on the fight against poverty as part of the Sustainable Development Goals

Since, the Presidency has for objective to promote the Agenda 2030 and implement the Sustainable Development Goals, ERIO would like to emphasise the goals to *"End poverty in all its forms, everywhere"* and *"Zero hunger"*. It is important to note that, according to a FRA [report](#), 80% of Roma are at risk of poverty, compared with an EU average of 17%. Extreme poverty is regarded as a critical barrier to Roma inclusion as it affects all parts of their life and often leads to marginalized living conditions. In order to implement the SDGs and to properly fight poverty within the EU, specific actions are to be taken for the Roma community.

3) Promote youth and women employment

ERIO welcomes the trio program's emphasis on employment, especially youth employment and women participation in the labour market. Indeed, once again the Roma community is, in that aspect, the most deprived minority in the EU. If unemployment rates are particularly high for Roma, they are higher for Roma women. According to a FRA [report](#), only 16% of Roma



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women are in paid work, the rate is at 34% for Roma men. The Presidency has to make sure that EU policies are targeted and gender-sensitive as Roma women are often more excluded and can face discrimination on multiple grounds. As for youth, the rate of unemployment through Roma youth is much higher than the average rate in the Union. Actions need to be taken both to ensure quality education and to promote specific training, in order to open better job prospects and improve young Roma's opportunities to get in the labour market.

4) Guarantee access to healthcare to all, including at risk groups

ERIO agrees with the trio concerning the fact that “*further efforts are needed in public health in order to guarantee access to healthcare for all EU citizens*”. Indeed, despite recent efforts and some self-perceived improvement, Roma still have limited health coverage and face multiple barriers when trying to access healthcare, including high level of discrimination. There is an urgent need to precisely assess the situation and take concrete measures to remedy it. In that field again, gender should be taken into consideration. Indeed, as noted by the Women's Right and Gender Equality Committee of the European Parliament in a recent [study](#), Roma women have the “*poorest birth outcomes and maternal health, with possibly the highest maternal death rate*” among the ethnic groups surveyed.

5) 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework

ERIO calls on the Presidency to ensure that a strong human rights dimension be given to the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework. The Presidency should make sure that all member states make use of these funds to tackle discrimination and anti-Gypsyism but also to fulfil their commitment under their National Roma Integration Strategies. Moreover, it is paramount that proper assessment of the use of the funds is done in order to ensure that the funds are well allocated to projects promoting Roma equal treatment and inclusion.



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For more information, please contact: Tel: +32 273 33 462 E-mail: office@erionet.eu

The European Roma Information Office (ERIO) is a European advocacy organisation which promotes political and public discussion on Roma issues by providing information to the EU institutions, civil society and governments. Through its wide network, it aims to combat racist discrimination against Roma through awareness raising, lobbying and policy development.

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