



PRESS RELEASE – Speed up efforts to ensure Roma’s equal treatment with respect to their fundamental rights

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The European Roma Information Office (ERIO) welcomes the new Fundamental Rights Agency’s (FRA) report¹ from the Second EU Minorities and Discrimination Survey. The report is based on large-scale survey data collected on almost 34,000 persons living in Roma households in nine EU Member States. Such research is vital for advocacy organisations working on Roma rights since the collection of ethnic data is essential to effectively monitor and evaluate the implementation of social inclusion policies and anti-discrimination law. As ERIO’s Executive Director, Ivan Ivanov stated, *“the report findings depict a worrying reality for Roma in the EU that falls well short of the targets set out in the Europe 2020 Strategy and the 2013 Council Recommendation”*.

- **It is urgent to translate the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) into local action to guarantee the equal treatment and rights of Roma and to eradicate anti-Gypsyism.**

According to the report, an overwhelming majority of Roma (80%) still live below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold of their country and continue to face discrimination in their daily lives and unequal access in healthcare, employment, education and public life. 41% of Roma felt discriminated against because of their ethnic origin at least once in one of these areas of daily life in the past five years. These findings show that despite the latest EU efforts to guarantee the equal treatment of Roma, there are no concrete improvements at the local level. *“Given the current political and social climate across the EU where racism, xenophobia and extreme right-wing and populist discourses are on the rise, it is more pertinent and urgent than ever to protect the EU founding values of equality and non-discrimination. Roma urgently need to be protected from discrimination and violation of their fundamental rights. This can be achieved by guaranteeing an effective implementation of the NRIS at local level while ensuring Roma’s participation in that process.”* noted Ivan Ivanov.

- **There is a need to raise awareness among Roma of EU anti-discrimination legislation and to tackle under-reporting.**

As the report demonstrates, there is a considerable lack of rights awareness and disturbingly low levels in reporting the widespread discrimination that Roma experience across the EU. On average, only 12% of Roma report their experiences of discrimination to an authority, while 27% of those surveyed did not know of any law prohibiting discrimination based on ethnic origin. This data reflects the findings of our paper² on Equality Bodies whose primary challenge is the under-reporting of incidents of discrimination by Roma followed by Roma’s lack of awareness of anti-discrimination law. *“There is a need to place less emphasis on formal complaints procedures and instead, adapt to Roma in order to better understand their experiences of discrimination. Capacity building on anti-discrimination legislation and rights can provide Roma with the knowledge which should be transmitted to the members of local communities to ensure sustainability.”* noted ERIO’s director.

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The European Roma Information Office (ERIO) is an international 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. www.erionet.eu - www.facebook.com/erionet.eu - www.twitter.com/ERIO_EU

¹ <http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/eumidis-ii-roma-selected-findings>

² http://www.erionet.eu/doc-paper-eps-and-nris-red_2014