



PRESS RELEASE

Roma's political participation is essential to safeguard their rights

Brussels, 8 April 2016

On the occasion of the International Roma Day, ERIO would like to stress the importance to promote Roma's full participation in political structures at local, national and European levels to ensure the effective implementation of Roma related policies, including the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS). As stressed in the [Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures in the member states](#), empowering Roma by promoting their political participation in society is critical to advance the process of Roma inclusion.

Roma have a history of exclusion and continue to be denied access to decision-making processes and institutions. *"To guarantee the rights of Roma, it is essential to ensure their genuine political participation so they are adequately represented in local, national and European decision-making structures."* notes ERIO's Executive Director Ivan Ivanov.

The "For Roma with Roma" motto should be genuinely applied at all levels. Roma need to be empowered to become democratic and participatory leaders in the process of Roma inclusion. To ensure this, conditions have to be created to grant them with equal opportunities to be represented in decision-making institutions. More investment is needed in political training and education aiming at Roma's active political participation at local, national and European level. Roma's political participation is closely linked to their inclusion enabling them to be involved in decision making processes concerning the design, implementation and evaluation of Roma related programmes and policies. It will further ensure the effective implementation of the NRIS at national and local levels. As Mr Ivanov concludes, *"It is crucial that Roma stop being passive recipients of policies affecting them and become equal participants in society."*

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Note to the editor:

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.

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