



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Roma Cultural Legacy**

Brussels, 8 April 2018 – This day is celebrated officially across the world as the International Romani Day in recognition of the importance of Roma ethnic minority in the formation process of European history and cultural identity. Today, ERIO not solely commemorates the culture and history of the Romani people, but also fights for their recognition and raise awareness of the issues facing Roma community, the largest ethnic minority in Europe, and at the same time the most discriminated against with difficult access to education, housing, health services and work.

From the South of Spain to the East of Romania, the contribution of Romani people to European culture is undeniable. But instead of being shown as the thinkers, writers, performers, and artists they are, Roma are presented as folkloric musicians, beggars, and thieves. This image of the Roma is simply false—and it must change.

Ivan Ivanov, Executive Director of ERIO, states: “Today we are focusing on what the Roma culture can contribute to open the eyes of people across Europe to the richness of its culture, and therefore to help with doing away with prejudices and stereotypes about Roma people.”

Seven years after the adoption of the National Roma Integration Strategies developed by EU Member States, progress has been made in terms of Roma integration in several countries, but Romani peoples overwhelmingly continue to face discrimination, marginalization and major challenges in enjoying their basic rights. Segregation in the education system, frequent forced evictions, discrimination, including racial profiling and ill-treatment by the police, are ubiquitous features in the lives of many European Roma. During a time when chauvinism and anti-Roma prejudice is on the rise—and when state funding is increasingly denied to projects that do not toe the nationalist line—it is crucial that minority arts and culture have a place of their own.

ERIO renews its commitment as a place for empowering the Romani people and its role on spreading the Roma culture across Europe. Because our goal is to build a place of communion and cultural recognition for all European Roma, so future generations and regular citizens no longer have to conduct their own searches to find the Roma people’s artistic and cultural legacy, which continues to shape Europe to this day.

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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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