



PRESS RELEASE

We need to guarantee equality of rights to all EU citizens

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ERIO would like, on the International Roma Day, to celebrate the cultures and history of the Roma communities and to stimulate debate about Roma inclusion. The Roma have a long history in Europe, and have contributed greatly to society and culture across the continent. This year, in what is also the European Year of Citizens, the onus of the day must be to reflect upon the extent to which Roma are truly integrated into European society.

European citizenship entails the conferring of rights, obligations, and a sense of belonging to all people in the European Union, no matter what their ethnicity, gender or social status. In theory, it exists to bring about equality and ensure we can all live and work wherever we like without fear of discrimination. Sadly, the reality for Roma does not reflect these ideals. Systematic discrimination towards the community continues to reinforce their social, economic and political marginalization and there are numerous examples of public bodies across the union remaining oblivious towards their obligation to prevent this. Forced evictions and deportations as well as discrimination in access to public services leave Roma unable to exercise their citizenship rights and do nothing to foster a sense of unity and belonging for all.

ERIO Executive Director Ivan Ivanov states: *“Whilst Europe deals with the financial crisis, it is important that on days such as this the national governments and the institutions of the EU and its candidate countries hear the voices of Roma people. For Europe to prosper, it must stay true to its values and ensure that equality in every field applies to all communities, not just the majority.”*

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The European Roma Information Office (ERIO) is an international advocacy organisation which promotes political and public discussion on Roma issues. It aims to combat racist discrimination against Roma and to contribute to an improved awareness of the problems faced by Roma communities. www.erionet.eu, facebook.com/erionet.eu, twitter.com/ERIO_EU