

## PRESS STATEMENT

### Fighting anti-Gypsyism at all levels

Brussels, 21 March 2019

On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the European Roma Information Office (ERIO) wants to remind politicians, civil society and citizens of the destructive consequences of racism. More precisely, ERIO wants to stress the need to combat anti-Gypsyism as it seems to be the last form of acceptable racism in Europe. Anti-Gypsyism is widespread and takes multiple forms, from the most appalling hate crime to the most subtle derogatory comments or attitudes.

Today, we find ourselves in a time where discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes against the Roma community are peaking and even impregnating political debates through the rise of extreme far right parties. As a recent and shocking example of this institutionalised racism, it is telling to bring up the so-called “Bulgarian Roma Concept” put forward by Krasimir Karakachanov, Bulgarian Deputy Minister. The text relies on the assumption that a “civilizational problem” prevents Roma from being integrated in Europe hence creating an ethnic division between people and feeding into intolerance and hatred. The largest group of measures contained in the Concept represents a real threat not only to the Roma community but also to democracy and basic human rights.

The Concept aims at restricting Roman women to have a third child by stopping child support if they do not agree to have an abortion, it aims at sanctioning parents whose children do not attend school by putting them in “public useful labour”, it aims at hindering the work of NGOs working on Roma issues as they are considered useless and promoting preferential treatment. The list goes on, reminding us more and more of the darkest days of Europe.

“Witnessing this rise of populism and banalized anti-Gypsyism, a couple of months away from the European Elections, is truly alarming. Now more than ever ERIO wants to encourage citizens and politicians to stand strong, to unapologetically reject all forms of racism and discrimination and to actively protect European values for all citizens”, says ERIO’s Executive Director Ivan Ivanov.

Anti-Gypsyism is without a doubt the strongest barrier to Roma inclusion. This issue has to be addressed and fought against at all levels of society in order to make formal equality an equality in practice for the Roma community.

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#### Note to the editor:

**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.