



EUROPEAN UNION

OSCE Permanent Council Nr 1141 Vienna, 6 April 2017

EU statement on International Roma Day

International Roma Day, which will be marked on 8 April, is an opportunity to both mark the progress achieved so far towards Roma empowerment and recognise the continuing challenges that persons belonging to the Roma community still continue to face in the OSCE area in terms of discrimination, marginalisation and social exclusion.

We all need to step up our efforts in the OSCE area in order to address at all levels the root causes of these persistent challenges with the involvement of Roma and Sinti communities and the civil society. Further efforts are needed in order to build the capacities of Roma and Sinti women and youth organizations.

Political leaders should be at the forefront of efforts to end systematic discrimination and propagation of negative stereotypes. They, and civil society, should condemn publicly any act of discrimination.

The European Union commends the ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues for its dedicated efforts in advancing the implementation of the OSCE commitments, in particular the OSCE Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti, and in assisting participating states to this end. We welcome its continuous efforts to enhance the public and political participation of persons belonging to Roma and Sinti communities, as well as to intensify dialogue and networking between representatives from Roma and Sinti civil society and policy makers for increasing representation of community interests. In this regard, we regret that participating States were not able to adopt at the Ministerial Council in Hamburg the Draft Decision on Enhancing Participation of Roma and Sinti in Public and Political Life, with a Particular Focus on Roma and Sinti Women and Youth.

Equality is one of the founding values of the European Union and combating social exclusion and discrimination is one of its specific tasks. In defining and implementing its policies and activities, the European Union takes into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment, the guarantee of adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health. The EU and its Member States are committed to fighting discrimination and accelerating the process of integration of persons belonging to the Roma community. A solid policy, legal and financial framework has been developed at both EU and national levels, which is constantly being assessed and updated. We would mention here, *inter alia*, the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020; the 2013 Council Recommendation on effective Roma integration measures; the 2016 Commission Communication assessing the implementation of the EU Framework; and the latest 2016 EU Council Conclusions on Accelerating the Process of Roma Integration.

The full implementation of all OSCE commitments continues to be one of the EU's guiding principles. We take this opportunity to reiterate our calls for full implementation of all OSCE commitments regarding Roma and Sinti and our firm engagement in this respect.

The Candidate Countries the FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA*, MONTENEGRO*, SERBIA* and ALBANIA*, the Country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and Potential Candidate BOSNIA and HERZEGOVINA, and the EFTA countries ICELAND, LIECHTENSTEIN and NORWAY, members of the European Economic Area, as well as UKRAINE, the REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA and GEORGIA align themselves with this statement.

* The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.