

Statement by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights on the occasion of International Roma Day 2010

7 April 2010

International Roma Day 2010 marks another year of failure to adequately address Roma discrimination in Europe. Roma and Traveller communities must be involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of strategies targeting them. A join-up EU approach to human rights implementation is the key to success.

The Fundamental Rights Agency's EU-MIDIS survey of immigrant and ethnic minority groups, released last December, revealed a bleak picture for the estimated 10 million Roma in the European Union. Roma reported the highest overall levels of discrimination across all areas surveyed. On average, 1 in 4 Roma respondents were victims of personal crime – including assaults, threats and serious harassment – at least once in the previous 12 months. 1 in 5 Roma respondents were victims of racially motivated personal crime at least once in that period. Further, 66-92% of Roma (depending on the country) did not report their most recent experience of discrimination anywhere.

International Roma Day in the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion therefore provides a significant opportunity and renewed impetus for taking action. Action is needed to bring Roma up to a level playing field with the rest of the population in key areas of everyday life. The Roma face discrimination in access to housing, public services, health care, education and employment.

“There are areas where improvements can be seen, but in too many places the situation is worse. EU and national authorities must now speak out against anti-Gypsyism and provide local authorities and all actors in the private sector with the tools to implement a join-up EU approach to human rights. A partnership approach is necessary.”

“Especially in times of economic crises, human rights need to be seen as an asset to our well being, not as a cost.”

Morten Kjaerum, Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

Legal instruments exist to combat discrimination and exclusion. But there is a need for practical measures to address the social exclusion of the Roma if these legal instruments are to have effect. Measures should include educational programmes to increase confidence and rights awareness amongst Roma youth, as well as promoting gender equality and actively including Romani women as partners at all stages of the policy cycle. European Structural Funds and pre-accession funds should be specifically allocated to support Roma inclusion, encouraging governments to deal with the issue of Roma discrimination and social inclusion in a comprehensive manner. The rigorous implementation of well-resourced policies and the proactive engagement of local authorities are also crucial if the statistics on the discrimination and resulting exclusion of the Roma are to change.

The Fundamental Rights Agency continues its dialogue with Romani women's networks at a Roundtable '[On a Road to Equality](#)' in Córdoba, Spain on 6-7 April. The discussions take place on the eve of the [Second European Roma Summit](#) which brings together actors at EU and national level.

FRA Reports and Surveys on Roma and Travellers in the EU:

- [The situation of Roma EU citizens moving to and settling in other EU Member States](#) (09/11/2009)
- [Housing conditions of Roma and Travellers in the European Union - Comparative report](#) (20/10/2009)
- EU-MIDIS: European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey, Data in Focus Report: Roma http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/EU-MIDIS_ROMA_EN.pdf
- [Roma and Travellers in Public Education](#) (01/05/2006)
- [Breaking the Barriers - Romani Women and Access to Public Health Care](#) (01/01/2003)