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EU ROMA POLICY COALITION



EU Roma Policy Coalition position on the Commission Staff Working Paper on Roma instrument for Roma Inclusion

3 July 2008

The EU Roma Policy Coalition finds the Commission paper to be revealing. It is indirectly highlighting the many gaps and failures that have resulted from the EU's and the Member State's approach to Roma inclusion.

Is not just that but once again we have a sense of déjà vu, we see the many problems, and there is also some indication of how they can be addressed, but there is yet no ambitious strategy, no long term planning, no direct commitment for an EU Roma Strategy. It is our opinion that the approach of the Commission for this paper was minimalist and sends a clear signal that the EC is rather reluctant to get seriously involved.

Indeed the paper is revealing, it compiles some interesting examples and does indeed contain useful information, it fails however when it comes to solutions for the many "lessons learned". A critical analysis of the findings should have set the basis for a vision on Roma inclusion and a strategy to achieve it. But the paper failed to draw meaningful conclusions from which the vision would build on.

It is again a reflection of the passive stance that the EC adopts when it comes to Roma inclusion, and seems as the EC is far more focused on passing the entire responsibility to Member States rather than focusing on the initiatives it could kick-start and coordinate. The Commission needs to acknowledge it is accountable on its actions as well as for its lack of action. And needs to assume that holds a particular role in launching, coordinating and supporting a wide and comprehensive strategy which is what it is required.

Some important issues the paper indirectly highlights are:

- Opportunistic approach when it comes to implemented Structural Funds' projects (the paper lists a number of vaguely positive programmes)
- Underlines problems but offers no solutions when it comes to enforcing anti-discrimination legislation and combating structural discrimination,
- The virtual non-existence of a debate on Roma inclusion in the Social Inclusion OMC and Employment Strategy and the lack of reporting on progress is probably the most stark revelation of the paper and the clearest reflection of the lack of political will at all levels,
- The absence of effective monitoring mechanisms, indicators and benchmarks, which would enable the EC to measure the impact of policies and do what is supposed to do monitor and provide coordination,
- The lack of effectiveness of awareness campaigns,

There are good outcomes from the document:

- A comprehensive inventory of “off the shelf” available instruments,
- Encouragement and indications on how instruments could be used,
- A useful assessment of gaps and failures under ‘lessons learnt’,
- Some indication of possible solutions, acknowledgment that improvements across the board are needed,

And bad results:

- The document lacks vision and reflects unwillingness for long term planning, (not ambitious)
- The overall conclusions are inconsistent with the content,
- Derogates responsibility of ‘good governance’ solely to the Member States’, EC fails to acknowledge that it is also accountable,
- Reuse of past findings, denoting lack of progress in addressing issues,
- Lack of creative solutions to the identified problems,
- Fails to call for a strategic approach on behalf of the EU,

Concluding remarks of ERPC:

- We expected the document to review, analyse and set the basis for a vision and a strategy to achieve Roma inclusion. The paper falls considerably short in this process, resembling an inventory. Nevertheless, we still regard the Staff Working Paper as a first step towards the adoption of an EU Roma Framework Strategy,
- We believe that the findings of the paper **do make the case** for an EU Roma Strategy even more stronger, unfortunately the conclusions do not match that,
- The EC needs to come up with an ambitious Framework Strategy matched by a Community Action Programme and an institutional coordination mechanism (Unit),
 - The Strategy has to be ambitious in scope and approach, envisaging clear targets and setting benchmarks,
 - The strategy has to benefit from an effective monitoring mechanism, the current Roma Inter Service Group could take up that role,
 - The Strategy has to be complementary and build upon current initiatives such as the Decade of Roma Inclusion, make use of Structural Funds, and take into consideration the measures and actions developed by the Fundamental Rights Agency
 - The Strategy should promote the insertion of Roma inclusion within the Social Inclusion Policy reports (Open Method of Coordination and Employment Strategy). It should also promote the Roma issue within the wide range of EC strategies, i.e. Health, Gender, Education etc.
 - The Strategy should be devised in close cooperation with Civil Society, especially Roma,
 - The EC should ensure the principle of non-discrimination, as one of its key roles.
- Taking into account the Council Conclusions of December 2007 and June 2008 European Council, we hope that EU High Level Conference on Roma, in September, will be a turning point that will bring strong developments that will eventually translate into ambitious policy making to benefit Roma across the European Union,