



EUROCITIES statement on Roma inclusion in cities



Equality and non-discrimination are two of the core values of the European Union. The *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU* prohibits any discrimination based on race, colour, ethnic or social origin and its chapters on freedoms and solidarity establish the right to education, preventive healthcare and medical treatment. The charter also guarantees respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. Yet, despite the existence of a robust anti-discrimination and human rights framework coupled with an EU framework on Roma inclusion, Roma still face widespread discrimination across Europe. The Roma are Europe's largest minority. They continue to experience racially motivated attacks and anti-Gypsyism.

Many Roma people live in poverty and social exclusion in many cities across Europe. Intra-European mobility and the migration of Roma from East to West has exacerbated shortcomings of the existing EU framework, such as lack of access to services for EU citizens who do not meet the conditions for a prolonged stay in another EU member state. It has also highlighted the fact that Roma inclusion is a shared concern across Europe, especially in cities.

Role of cities

We have a crucial role to play to protect the rights of our most vulnerable residents, including ethnic minorities, and can contribute to **tackle social exclusion of Roma in Europe**¹. This includes implementing initiatives in our own territories and beyond, to ensure that our actions benefit not only our local population but Roma as a whole.

The Council of the European Union's recommendation from December 2013 on effective Roma integration measures acknowledges that Roma inclusion policy initiatives need to be designed and implemented by Member States **in close cooperation with cities**.

We endeavour to offer a decent life to all by providing non-discriminatory access to services such as education, health, training, employment and housing, in those areas for which we have responsibility and according to our local institutional context and circumstances.

¹ Cities work in different contexts. For some, Roma are national minorities in their cities while, for others, Roma populations constitute a new group of mobile EU citizens who arrive in conditions of extreme vulnerability, disadvantage and poverty. Finally, Roma non-EU citizens (most often from Western Balkans) fall under the scope of third country nationals, often as asylum seekers or irregular migrants. Although interrelated, rights and entitlements for these groups are different and cities do not always have legal competences over them.

City authorities can develop and implement initiatives to combat discrimination and ensure equal access for Roma in the programmes and services to which they are entitled, in accordance with cities responsibilities, including:

- promoting equal access to social housing, employment and health services to which Roma are entitled and ensure the specific needs of Roma are understood and met by service providers
- ensuring Roma do not suffer discrimination and that there is equity in accessing mainstream city services
- taking the necessary steps to ensure equal access to quality and mainstream education for Roma children
- encouraging meaningful participation of Roma communities in the development and implementation of inclusion policies
- strive towards the full social inclusion of Roma in our societies and closing the gap between Roma and non-Roma
- widely communicating cities' commitment to equal opportunities to stop negative stereotypes of Roma.

City authorities can support one another by sharing and spreading good practice and policies across Europe, including:

- developing and participating in mutual learning and exchanges with European institutions, national and regional governments and other cities, to promote dissemination of successful approaches to Roma integration
- promoting social innovation and good governance in this sector
- developing decentralised cooperation between cities of arrival and cities or regions of departure to contribute to local economic and social development
- supporting the fight against structural discrimination of Roma through systematic initiatives; such as municipal anti-discrimination plans for Roma, awareness-raising campaigns, training of police forces, teachers and social workers
- cooperating with national governments and National Contact Points for Roma integration to promote the local implementation of the EU Roma framework and address bottlenecks
- implementing these initiatives in the spirit of the second 'Basic Common principle on Roma Inclusion' of 'explicit but not exclusive targeting' by focusing on Roma as a target group but not to the exclusion of others who share similar socio-economic circumstances
- allocating sufficient resources for Roma inclusion objectives, including raising resources from European and national funds to dedicate to this area of our work

We recommend that the European institutions:

- ensure the full implementation of the EU anti-discrimination framework by member states
- Support member states in meeting the Council recommendation on effective Roma integration adopted in December 2013 by providing evidence and supporting stakeholder engagement in the implementation of Roma inclusion
- Provide a sustainable platform to foster structural exchange between cities, regions and member states as well as mutual learning and capacity building on Roma inclusion
- Allocate sufficient financial resources for the social inclusion of Roma, including mobile EU citizens, in need of support

We also recommend that all EU member states and candidate countries:

- Adhere to their commitment to targeted action to bridge the gap between the Roma and the rest of the population, by allocating sufficient resources to the implementation of their national Roma strategies
- Involve local stakeholders, including cities and Roma representatives, at every stage of implementation of Roma inclusion and related policies such as housing, education, health and employment, which have a bearing on social cohesion in our communities

In full respect of national competences in the field of social inclusion, and the different situations in different EU member states and candidate countries, we stress the urgent need for a partnership approach. As frontline service providers for Roma people, city authorities should be directly involved by national and EU institutions.

More systematic involvement of cities, together with the changes we propose, will contribute substantially to Europe's ability to respond to one of its most urgent challenges and better enable cities to ensure the successful social and economic inclusion of Roma people.