



Report from the third meeting of the European platform for Roma inclusion: *Elaborating a medium term roadmap for the Platform*

Brussels, June 17, 2010
Permanent Representation of Spain to the EU
Boulevard du Régent, 52. 1000 Brussels.

Context: The third meeting of the integrated European Platform for Roma¹ inclusion took place in Brussels on 17th June 2010. The meeting was co-organised by the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU and the European Commission. The meeting took stock of recent developments in Roma inclusion at European level and focused specifically on the discussion of a roadmap proposed by the Spanish Presidency, providing a mid-term framework of stakeholder actions and expected outputs for the Platform².

I. Political opening

The meeting was opened by General Director of Social Policy, Families and Childhood Juan Carlos Mato Gómez (Spanish Ministry of Health and Social Policy) and Belinda Pyke, Director, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

II. Developments under the Spanish Presidency

Dolores Ruiz (Deputy Director for Social Programmes, Directorate General of Social Policy, Families and Childhood of the Spanish Ministry of Health and Social Policy) and Miguel de la Corte (Permanent Representation of Spain to the EU) reported on the developments under the Spanish Presidency, in particular the objectives and results of the Second Roma Summit that was held in Córdoba on 8 & 9 April 2010 and the Council conclusions on Advancing Roma inclusion³.

¹ For more information on the Platform see <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=761&langId=en>

² As foreseen in the Council conclusions on advancing Roma inclusion adopted at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting of 7 June 2010

³ See <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=88&langId=en&eventsId=234&furtherEvents=yes>

III. Recent developments at European level

Katarina Mathernova (Deputy Director General, Directorate General Regional Policy - DG REGIO) explained that the aim of the recently signed pilot project on Roma inclusion⁴ led by DG REGIO is to explore whether it is possible to move from good projects to good policies. She announced that the amendment of article 7 of the European Regional Development Fund Regulation, which extends the eligibility for financial support for housing interventions in favour of marginalised communities in rural areas, was about to enter into force. The interventions will have to take place within the framework of an integrated approach with actions, in particular, in the fields of education, health, social affairs, employment and security as well as desegregation measures.

Belinda Pyke referred to the recent Commission communication on Roma inclusion⁵ and the progress report which takes stock on recent developments at in the Member States and at European level. She explained that the Commission is organising a series of High Level Events in the Member States involving national politicians at the highest level, civil society and representatives of the Roma community, as well as international organisations in order to identify the challenges and possible solutions to make the use of Structural Funds more efficient in underpinning the policies promoting the economic and social integration of Roma. She also explained that the Commission is developing 'model approaches' for Roma inclusion that will propose policy tools based on good practices, taking into account the heterogeneity and different socio economic conditions of Roma communities.

IV. Developments in international organisations

The representative from the UN OHCHR confirmed Roma inclusion as an Office's priority area. The EURoma network representative announced the publication of a report on Roma and Structural Funds, and pointed out that the network is working on a contribution concerning the next round of financial programming period. The Council of Europe referred to the ongoing work by the Intergovernmental Committee on Roma Issues currently focused on the empowerment of Roma women. The Council of Europe Development Bank representative mentioned an €8 million loan which has been recently made available to the Spanish Fundacion Secretariado Gitano to help them with their activities. The OSCE representative mentioned a recently concluded a report on violence against Roma in Hungary.

V. Presentation of the Roadmap by the Spanish Presidency followed by discussion

Jose Manuel Fresno (Expert on Roma issues) presented on behalf of the Spanish Presidency a roadmap proposal for further development of the Integrated European Platform for Roma Inclusion, including key issues to be addressed by the Platform by the upcoming EU Presidencies, working methods, outputs of the Platform and dissemination and impact of activities.

⁴ 'Pan-European coordination of Roma integration methods—Roma inclusion (2009/C 171/08)

⁵ 'The social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe' COM (2010) 133 final, 7.4.2010

The main contributions and suggestions made by the participants during the ensuing discussion can be summarised as follows:

<i>Key issues</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asylum seekers, forced returns (i.e Kosovo), human right abuses and trafficking issues (prevention and protection) to be included amongst the key issues • Desegregation in education is not exclusive to urban areas and should also cover rural areas. Intercultural education, change of educational systems, adult vocational training and the issue of channelling Roma children into special schools to be added • More focus on specific problems of Roma women in health, also on health issues not directly linked to Roma cultural traditions (for example smoking during pregnancy) • Need for a better definition of the topics 'capacity building', 'youth' and 'culture' • Given the importance of antidiscrimination, it should be dealt with as a separate theme, including justice and prejudice issues. Racism and anti-gypsism should be included as a transversal theme
<i>Working methods</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The direct involvement and participation of as many Member States as possible at national level in the work and the meetings of the Platform is crucial, and this at the highest possible level to put the issue in the centre of the political agendas. It is recommended that the Trio consults other Member States on their priorities when preparing the work of the Platform and that the work of the preparatory groups starts earlier in the process, at the beginning of each Presidency. • The active involvement of the Roma in all type of work and meetings of the Platform was also considered essential. • It is suggested to extend the duration of the meetings to two days so that one of the days can be used exclusively for discussion and exchange on national developments between Member States. • The work and outputs of the platform should take into account and refer to the existing results and outcomes of other structures like the Decade for Roma inclusion, the European Parliament, the Council of Europe or other international bodies. • Even if the Platform is a Presidency driven event, there should be a permanent contact point to ensure continuity of the work of the Platform and answer possible queries. The role of the European Commission in the work of the Platform should be strengthened possibly assuming a 'permanent secretariat' role.
<i>Outputs</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to produce recommendations/proposals addressed to Members states at national level, if possible to be channelled through the work of the Council. • It is suggested that Europe2020, the OMC and the Integrated Guidelines are the best instruments to ensure Member States active involvement in Roma inclusion. A clarification on how to link in practice the work of the Platform with the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) is also needed.
<i>Dissemination and impact</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networks of colleagues of those attending the Platform meetings could be used as a dissemination channel • Dissemination amongst Roma population and other relevant society groups on the work of the Platform could be considered (including translation of Platform related documents into Romani language).

VI. Presentation of the programme of the Belgium presidency

Ms Magda De Meyer presented the approach of the Belgium presidency vis-à-vis the inclusion of Roma issue by mainstreaming the issue in three main events: a conference on child poverty in September, the Equality Summit in November and conference on homelessness in December. Ms De Meyer also announced that the fourth Platform meeting will take place under the Belgian Presidency at some point between 7 and 17 December. An issue that the Belgian presidency would like to explore is the role of mediators in Roma integration.

VII. Conclusions

General Director Mato closed the meeting by announcing that a final document will be prepared within the following weeks by the Spanish presidency in cooperation with the Commission and the members of the preparatory working group, reflecting the discussions and incorporating the suggestions, as far as the limits set by the EPSCO conclusions permit it. The final version of the document will be circulated amongst the participants of the Platform.