



## Expulsions of Roma from France: Parliament calls for EU action

In a debate on the situation of Roma people, EPP group MEPs emphasized the need for stronger EU action to foster the social integration of Roma, while S&D, ALDE, Greens/EFA and GUE/NGL speakers condemned the French government's expulsion of Roma people as discriminatory and in breach of EU law. The legality of these measures needs to be assessed, said Commissioner Reding.

For the Council, Belgian Secretary of State for European Affairs Olivier Chastel reaffirmed its attachment to the "values and principles in the Treaties" and "respect for the rule of law, including the rights of minorities". He reiterated that it is up to all Member States to support the integration of the Roma. "There has to be freedom of movement, and the Roma cannot be victims of discrimination", he added.

Justice and Fundamental Rights Commissioner Viviane Reding said that "Member States are in charge of public order and ensuring the safety" of their citizens, but all measures should be proportionate. Ms Reding noted the assurance of French authorities that there had been no discrimination of the Roma. However, the Commission services are "checking if what has been said reflects the reality on the ground", she said, adding that "so far, we have identified a number of issues where French authorities will have to provide supplementary information".

Livia Jaroka (EPP, HU) reminded the House that expulsions may be decided "only on a case by case basis". She stressed that "nobody should face expulsion just for being Roma" and that collective expulsions "might be repulsive", but so is "the lack of action to alleviate poverty and social exclusion", she said, emphasizing the importance of reinforcing Roma inclusion through a common European strategy.

Hannes Swoboda (S&D, AT) expressed his disappointment with the Commission's "unclear answer". "This is scandalous. I want to know whether the French authorities have contravened the European law or not", he said, adding that there might be other countries, "maybe Italy or Hungary", which could follow in France's steps.

Renate Weber (ALDE, RO) said that France "is using tricks" by giving Roma people money provided they leave the country. "They call it voluntary repatriation", but it is a "clear violation of the European and international legislation", she said, stressing that the Commission needs to demonstrate that it is truly the guardian of EU principles.

Hélène Flautre (Greens/EFA, FR) asked whether Commissioner Reding, after having held several meetings on the issue, still had no clear opinion on the matter. She asked whether the Commissioner needed any extra experts and evidence to conclude that the situation is unacceptable, adding "stop refusing to take your responsibility!"

Timothy Kirkhope (ECR, UK) asked his colleagues to wait until the Commission makes a formal ruling on the legality of the measures. "Then we can make an informed judgement based on all the facts and decide how to focus on better integration of the Roma people, rather than pre-emptively condemn a fellow Member State", he said, underlining that "this continent must never revive the ghosts of past nationalisms".

# Press release

"Sarkozy is violating EU law, the free movement of persons and the Charter of Fundamental Rights", argued Cornelia Ernst (GUE/NGL, DE), adding that "I would like to see a stop to these deportations", also mentioning cases in Austria, Germany and Italy. "We have to fight against this in the Parliament", she concluded.

"All this is a pretext", said Mario Borghezio (EFD, IT), highlighting that "Romania and Bulgaria have not resolved the problem back home". Roma people "should also obey the law", he continued. "EU citizens are also victims of their crimes and would not like to have Roma living next door", he said, adding that "we need to have courage to say this".

*A resolution will be put to a plenary vote on Thursday (9 September)*

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