



Roma: binding EU standards to integrate Europe's largest minority

Plenary sessions

Europe's 10-12 million Roma should benefit from binding minimum standards at EU level to improve their access to employment, education, housing and healthcare, says Parliament in a resolution adopted on Wednesday.

The resolution, which seeks to influence the Commission's upcoming strategy for Roma inclusion, also calls for better protection of fundamental rights and use of EU funding.

Roma people have suffered systematic discrimination and are struggling against "an intolerable degree of exclusion" as well as human rights violations, severe stigmatisation and discrimination in public and private life, says the resolution, which was adopted by 576 votes to 32 with 60 abstentions.

Parliament's rapporteur Livia Járóka (EPP, HU) said in the debate preceding the vote "with the adoption of this report, we have made a great step towards an EU-level effort to alleviate the poverty and social exclusion of our continent's largest ethnic minority. This EU-level strategy must place its primary emphasis on the fulfilment and promotion of the fundamental rights to employment, housing, health care and education".

Priority areas

MEPs set out the priority areas which will require more effort from local, national and EU authorities to integrate Roma people. The Commission, they say, should present a roadmap for introducing binding minimum standards at EU level for these priorities, which are education, employment, housing and healthcare. The Commission should also introduce award criteria in favour of compliant Member States and penalties for non-compliance.

Combating undeclared jobs, hiring Roma staff in public administration, increasing the number of Roma teachers and ensuring that Roma children receive education in their own language are other requests made to Member States and the Commission.

Fundamental rights

The "questionable repatriations" of Roma that have been taking place in several Member States have created "fear and anxiety amongst the Roma population as well as worrying levels of racism and discrimination", according to the resolution.

The EU strategy should address all forms of violations of the Roma's fundamental rights, including "discrimination, segregation, hate speech, ethnic profiling and unlawful fingerprinting, as well as unlawful eviction and expulsion". A dialogue between local authorities, judicial bodies, the police and the Roma community is also needed to abolish discrimination in the judicial sphere and combat ethnic profiling.

Better use of EU funding

Press release

Parliament calls for the creation of EU bodies under the supervision of the existing Roma Task Force to secure EU funding in support of good local initiatives and to identify and report misuse of funds in time. The scope of EU funding should be extended so that projects to improve public services are also eligible. Finally, dedicated funding should be allocated in the Cohesion Policy to support the strategy.

Next steps

The Commission is expected to present its proposal on 5 April and the European Council should adopt it at its meeting on 24 June. Roma inclusion is one of the Hungarian Presidency's priorities.

Procedure: Non-legislative resolution

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