



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2009 - 2014

Committee on Regional Development

2010/2276(INI)

31.1.2011

OPINION

of the Committee on Regional Development

for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs

on the EU strategy on Roma inclusion
(2010/2276(INI))

Rapporteur: Andrey Kovatchev

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Regional Development calls on the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Recognises that Roma communities face discrimination and/or frequent prejudice in several Member States and that this situation is exacerbated by the current economic and financial crisis resulting in loss of employment; stresses that the inclusion of the Roma population is both the responsibility of all the Member States and the EU institutions; calls on the Member States to fully cooperate with the EU and representatives of the Roma population in setting up integrated policies, making use of all the EU financial resources available under the EU Funds, and in particular under the ERDF, ESF and EAFRD, to promote Roma inclusion at national, regional and local level; invites the Commission to give particular attention to requests for technical assistance in a bid to improve the effectiveness of all available instruments for the integration of Roma communities;
2. Recalls that European programmes and funding are available and can be used for the social and economic integration of the Roma people but that improved communication is needed on all levels within the local authorities, civil society and the potential target groups so that Roma people are informed about them; furthermore, encourages the use of existing EU funds for building new houses or renovating existing ones, improving the engineering infrastructure, local utilities, communication systems, education, measures for access to the job market etc.;
3. Calls for better assistance to project organisers eligible for European funding for the integration of Roma people, by creating platforms for information, analyses and exchanges of good practices;
4. Recognises that, in times of demographic change and other processes affecting the EU as a whole, the Roma population, which has been part of our common heritage for centuries and is the largest ethnic minority in the EU, should be given incentives through good quality education, decent housing and job opportunities to fully integrate into the work place and contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive economic development as foreseen in the EU 2020 strategy, in particular in the 'European Platform against Poverty' initiative; takes the view that social inclusion is a precondition for achieving the EU 2020 strategy objectives; calls on the Member States and the local and regional public authorities, therefore, to increase their efforts now, by reinforcing their effective strategies for addressing the specific circumstances (deep poverty, lack of education and access to social services, poor health conditions, lack of civil registration documents, segregated and substandard housing, low level of employment) of marginalised communities, as an imperative in order to combat social exclusion of the Roma population and contribute to further integration within Member States; emphasises that a successful policy is a mixture of approaches taking social, economic and cultural factors into account;
5. Calls on the Member States and regional and local authorities to promote information and awareness campaigns in order to ensure full understanding of the problem, to facilitate and improve access to education and other services, and to promote reintegration into the

employment market; emphasises, however, the need for more structured and systematic mainstreaming of Roma-related issues within all relevant European and national policies, in order to ensure effectiveness, real inclusion, and sustainability; urges policy makers at every level to consult Roma communities, associations and NGOs which are seeking to uphold the rights of the Roma and secure their social and employment market reintegration, focusing in particular on women;

6. Calls on Member States to develop cross-sectoral poverty reduction strategies that take into consideration the often sensitive issue of the coexistence of the Roma community and the majority community that are both affected by lack of employment, poverty and marginalisation; highlights the importance of incentive measures that provide visible benefits to encourage the poor to enter the labour market rather than live off social benefits and perhaps work on the black market; emphasises that programmes promoting mutual understanding and tolerance towards each other are of utmost importance;
7. Underlines, in this context, the need to continue EU programmes, such as the 'Progress programme' to combat discrimination and JASMINE which promotes investment in capacity building, and calls for such programmes to be further developed beyond 2013;
8. Highlights the fact that the social exclusion of the Roma has a very strong territorial dimension of poverty and marginalisation which is concentrated in underdeveloped micro-regions that severely lack the financial resources required to make their own contribution to the Community funding for which they are eligible and which generally lack the administrative capacity and human resources to make good use of the funding; emphasizes the need for specific efforts to be focussed on these micro-regions that are often peripheral intra-regional areas and for the substantial simplification of bureaucratic red tape so that the maximum possible allocation of resources can be achieved under the umbrella of the Cohesion Policy;
9. Welcomes the opportunity created through the provisions of Regulation (EU) No 437/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 May 2010, providing up to 3% of the ERDF allocation to specific programmes or 2% of the overall allocated budget for the rehabilitation of housing for the benefit of marginalised communities; regrets that no operational plans have so far been changed to reprioritise housing of the Roma population; calls on Member States to make quick and full use of this new opportunity within the framework of the Structural Funds in order to strengthen the prospects of effective social inclusion; calls on the Commission to come forward with a specific action plan on this Regulation to speed up the use of the funds and recommends the preparation of a Commission report on their utilisation; furthermore, calls on the Member States to make effective use of the potential for interaction between the ERDF, the ESF and EAFRD in developing programmes for Roma integration;
10. Recognises that Roma communities are extremely heterogeneous groups, with the consequence that there can be no single strategy; recommends therefore that the local and regional authorities of the Member States propose effective integration policies that should differ according to their specific backgrounds (geographical, economic, social, cultural); recommends that the Commission makes use of the experience acquired by those authorities which have actively contributed to the integration of Roma communities

and encourages the use of best practices and recipes for success, with a view to achieving their social inclusion;

11. Recalls that the main prerequisite of successful integration is a joint effort made by both mainstream society and the Roma community; calls therefore on the Member States to help improve the housing and employment situation of the Roma people, and recommends that Member States and regional and local public authorities integrate - in accordance with the regulation governing the European Regional Development Fund - the allocation of new housing to marginalised communities into a broader, more complex policy framework of mutual and two-way social commitment, such as community building, which includes the participation of Roma in the process of building the new establishments and mutual efforts to enhance school attendance for children and substantially reduce unemployment; Member States can thus significantly contribute towards a concrete solution for the location needs of marginalised groups living in poor housing conditions; also urges the Member States to make use of the EU Roma network in order to encourage an exchange of best practices;
12. Recognises that the complexity of paperwork may constitute an obstacle to project organisers; stresses the need to step up work on simplifying grant procedures; stresses the under-utilisation of European funding in this field;
13. Maintains that part of the solution lies in the full commitment of Member States to provide effective support for project organisers and that Member States, in conjunction with the Commission, have a role to play in encouraging local authorities to select projects to integrate Roma people.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	27.1.2011
Result of final vote	+: 37 -: 1 0: 4
Members present for the final vote	François Alfonsi, Luís Paulo Alves, Charalampos Angourakis, Sophie Auconie, Catherine Bearder, Victor Boștinăru, Zuzana Brzobohatá, Alain Cadec, Salvatore Caronna, Francesco De Angelis, Tamás Deutsch, Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, Danuta Maria Hübner, Ian Hudghton, María Irigoyen Pérez, Seán Kelly, Evgeni Kirilov, Constanze Angela Krehl, Petru Constantin Luhan, Riikka Manner, Iosif Matula, Erminia Mazzoni, Miroslav Mikolášik, Lambert van Nistelrooij, Jan Olbrycht, Wojciech Michał Olejniczak, Markus Pieper, Georgios Stavrakakis, Csanád Szegedi, Nuno Teixeira, Michael Theurer, Kerstin Westphal, Hermann Winkler, Joachim Zeller
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Vasilica Viorica Dăncilă, Karima Delli, Andrey Kovatchev, James Nicholson, Elisabeth Schroedter
Substitute(s) under Rule 187(2) present for the final vote	Edvard Kožušník, Norica Nicolai, Jan Zahradil