

INTRA-EU MOBILITY OF EUROPEAN ROMA CITIZENS: FREE MOVEMENT FOR ALL

10 December 2018
Ploiești, Romania

INTRODUCTION

The event was organised by national NGO Pakivale (“Brotherhood”) and the European Public Health Alliance on 10 December in Ploiești, Romania. It brought together representatives of the relevant European and national institutions, municipalities, NGOs and members of Roma communities to discuss the issue of Roma mobility within the Member States (MS) of the European Union (EU). The aim was to address questions that have remained unanswered over a long period of time but that have marked the lives of thousands of Roma people across Europe, including the following:

- The limits of the free movement directive in the Roma context
- The state of play of the infringement procedure against Italy
- Are the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) used as a pretext by MS to “ping-pong” European Roma citizens from one MS to another?
- Transnational cooperation among MS to hinder Roma mobility
- Measures put in place to ease the re-integration of repatriated Roma

In particular - In the context of the upcoming Romanian Presidency (Jan – Jun 2019) – the event aimed to raise awareness of the issue, which concerns many Romanian citizens of Roma background.

DISCUSSION

It has been seven years since the adoption of the EU Framework for the NRIS, yet one of the most crucial obstacles to the proper integration of Roma communities remains unaddressed. The intra-EU mobility of European Roma citizens has become a taboo subject, which is all too often relegated to the sphere of far-right political parties eager to re-define the meaning of European citizenship and the principles and values of democratic societies and fundamental rights, as part of increasing hostile “law and order” anti-migration discourses.

The events occurring in Italy in summer 2018 raised once again the question regarding the efficiency of national policies and programmes designated by the MS to address Roma inclusion. The mass eviction of nearly 450 Roma citizens from the Camping River camp ground north of Rome, accompanied by the declarations of the Italian Minister of the Interior, Matteo Salvini, who called for a census of Roma people in Italy, was once again met with silence and denial of the institutions that are meant to guard over the EU treaties and safeguard respect of fundamental rights

In this context, the Roma Holocaust Memorial Day (2 August) was also discussed, given that thousands of Roma took it as an opportunity to stage solidarity protests in cities across Europe including in Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Spain, demanding that the responsible authorities put an end to anti-gypsyism and racist oppression. Unfortunately, these protests did not cause any reaction, neither from the responsible institutions nor from national governments.

Roma and pro-Roma civil society from all over Europe already voiced their concerns back in 2010 when dozens of Roma were sent back to Romania and Bulgaria after by France under a controversial policy backed by

President Nicolas Sarkozy. The so called “voluntary repatriation” included an [agreement](#) which stipulated that 20 families, at the time living in Nantes, should be supported by the Romanian Office for Integration and Inclusion to re-integrate and settle in their home country. Faced by destitution and poverty, the families took matters into their own hands and travelled back to France or other MS. Sadly, the European Commission has listed this agreement as a best practice in its [2016 Report](#).

Currently there are increased concerns surrounding the criminalisation of “economically inactive” Roma living in the United Kingdom, many of whom are deported against their will in the run-up to Brexit.



Co-funded by
the Health Programme
of the European Union

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Transparency Register Number:
18941013532-08