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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

REVISITING THE EU ROMA FRAMEWORK

Assessing the European Dimension for the Post-2020 Future

March 2017

The report is based on desk research and **27 responses** to a questionnaire distributed to active Roma and pro-Roma civil society organizations in **nine countries**: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, Spain and the UK. It focuses primarily on the **European dimension** of the design and implementation of the EU Roma Framework, providing a critical overview of its relevance for the process of implementation of the NRIS in member states and for potential reforms of the Framework in the **post-2020 Future**.

The report finds that although the very existence of the **EU Roma Framework is an achievement in itself** and represents a turning point for Roma communities in Europe, by design, it has several major shortcomings. The main weakness emphasized is the **non-binding** character of the EU Roma Framework as a "**soft" policy tool**. Furthermore, the **imprecise definition of the target group** – the Roma – leads to inconsistencies and incongruent approaches of NRIS across the EU. The imprecise policy design results in confounding social and ethnic categories by racializing social problems while, at the same time, the wide-range of discrimination that Roma face in Europe has been insufficiently tackled.

The **absence of a response to antigypsyism** in the EU Roma Framework must be addressed. It results in reluctance to include explicit measures targeting anti-discrimination and specifically antigypsyism in national strategies. **Additional thematic areas** such as **political participation**, Roma **arts and culture** and **history** were also identified which should be explicitly mentioned as complementary measures to the four main priority areas of **education**, **employment**, **housing** and **healthcare**. Furthermore, **mechanisms of coordination, participation and monitoring and evaluation** should be improved to make better use of existing instruments.

The report concludes that **post-2020**, the **EU Roma Framework should be maintained** but should undergo a **substantial reform** that would reorient the current policy design.

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EU ROMA FRAMEWORK REFORM POST-2020

- **Raising the profile of the EU Roma Framework – towards a binding approach:** the European Commission and the Council should review the viability of mandatory adoption of national strategies.
- **Coherent policy design:** the EC should be mindful of internal heterogeneity of Roma communities by adopting intersectional approaches and ensuring that no sector of Roma population is left outside the scope of the EU Roma Framework. The EC should be more consistent regarding designing NRIS based on reliable data and evidence. Detailed and realistic action-plans should be provided with an adequate and pre-defined budget.
- **Centrality of antigypsyism:** manifestations of antigypsyism, including institutional racism, should be combated transversally, in the four key areas of the Framework and NRIS, while specific reactive and preventive measures should be introduced. Recognition, operationalization (also in courts) and application of antigypsyism as a specific form of racism should be promoted, both on the EU level as well as in national settings.
- **Stronger role and participation of Roma:** the European Commission needs to ensure the participation of Roma CSOs in the policy process, especially in design, implementation and monitoring, including a degree of decision-making power, at EU level and in national contexts in regard to the EU Framework and NRIS. The EC should provide specific guidelines as well as require introduction of concrete measures which guarantee quality participation, including capacity-building and training of Roma CSOs; for their implementation, core funding should be assigned.
- **Importance of adequate monitoring and evaluation system:** lack of reliable data disaggregated by ethnicity paired with lack of transparency and accountability mechanisms are the main flaws which make the process of monitoring and evaluation difficult and unreliable. For this reason, the EC should promote collecting data, including data on ethnicity and should continue systematically involving other EU agencies in completing and contrasting data. It is essential to ensure regular independent and external evaluations, based on participatory methodologies including Roma community members. Such evaluations should be impact-oriented and should serve as a comparison to the data reported by member states.
- **Securing political commitment:** the tendency towards declining political support is likely to strengthen in the near future. The multiple crises and the growing popularity of anti-Roma sentiment across Europe since 2011 have negatively affected the implementation of NRIS and led to gradual deprioritizing of Roma-inclusion efforts, especially on local and regional levels. Reversing these trends will remain a central strategic objective for European institutions as well as for Roma advocacy groups. A major mobilisation of key stakeholders, including upcoming EU presidencies, is needed to secure political commitment for the EU Roma Framework up to 2020 and beyond.
- **Assuring funding:** funding is one of the main incentives motivating member states to invest in Roma inclusion. The links between EU political and financial priorities and the EU Roma Framework should be further strengthened. More importantly, the next multi-annual financial framework (MFF) should be connected to the policy priorities of the future EU Roma Framework. The use of instruments such as Country-Specific Recommendations (CSR) under the European Semester proved to be effective – this practice should be extended to all EU member states. The EC should strengthen its monitoring mechanisms to make sure that the funds are adequately spent, and not misused to perpetuate or exacerbate situations of exclusion.