



BRIEFING FOR MEMBERS

NATIONAL ROMA PLATFORMS: WHAT ARE THEY AND WHY DO THEY MATTER?

October 2017

Why this briefing?

Each year, the European Commission organizes a European Roma Platform, a two-day international conference in Brussels which brings together representatives from the EU institutions, national governments, local authorities and (pro-) Roma civil society.

In 2015, the Platform was dedicated to two topics: combating Anti-Gypsyism and improving multi-stakeholder coordination. Both topics were meant to address a 'blind spot' within the existing [EU Framework on National Roma Integration Strategies](#); namely, the fact that the EU Framework lacked an explicit 'action pillar' on tackling racism towards Roma, and the fact that it had so far failed to facilitate a broad and effective involvement of non-governmental stakeholders in political decision-making.¹

In response to this latter challenge, the European Commission committed to support EU Member States in the development of so-called National Roma Platforms. The aim of these Platforms, coordinated by the National Roma Contact Point in each country, would be to bring together relevant actors from the national level on a regular basis, in order to enhance mutual transparency and cooperation. These efforts go beyond the EU, as similar structures are being set up in EU candidate countries (mainly in the Western Balkans).

Whilst National Roma Platforms represent an important step forward in improving multi-stakeholder coordination, a lack of publicly available information is currently preventing them from being as effective and inclusive as they could be; indeed, many (pro-) Roma civil society organisations operating at the national and local level are not aware of the existence of National Roma Platforms and don't know how to get involved. This briefing is aimed at providing Eurodiaconia members with more information on the purpose of the Platforms and on ways to get involved.

What is a National Roma Contact Point?

With the launch of the EU Framework on National Roma Integration Strategies (2011-2020), all EU Member States are now required to develop national Roma inclusion strategies (or integrated sets of policy measures which benefit Roma and other vulnerable groups).

In each EU Member State, a National Roma Contact Point is now responsible for the coordination of national Roma inclusion policies, based on four 'action pillars': housing, health, education and employment.

National Roma Contact Points are not individuals but governmental departments. For an updated list, please click [here](#).

National Roma Contact Points also exist for the EU candidate countries. For more information, please contact Marta.Garcia-Fidalgo@ec.europa.eu.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/justice/events/roma-platform-2015/files/romaplatform2015report_en.pdf





What are National Roma Platforms?

The National Roma Platforms are intended to cover several key purposes:

- To empower the National Roma Contact Points by enhancing their visibility towards Roma and non-Roma stakeholders at national, regional and local level.
- To ensure effective involvement of all relevant parties (i.e. national, regional, local authorities, Roma communities, NGOs, private entrepreneurs, trade unions, academia, equality bodies, etc.) in political decision-making. This includes both policy development and the allocation of available financial resources from EU and national budgets.
- To identify gaps in the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy and to jointly reflect on ways to effectively address these, taking into account country-specific challenges.

The European Commission is providing financial support for the development of National Roma Platforms across EU Member States; however, so far, not all national governments have chosen to make use of this funding. According to the [2017 Commission Communication](#) on Roma inclusion, 15 out of 28 Member States have initiated 'national consultation processes' under the coordination of the National Roma Contact Point. It is currently unclear, however, in how many Member States these 'processes' have already culminated into formal National Roma Platforms.² Furthermore, it isn't mentioned in which EU candidate countries similar structures have been set up.

Depending on the country, members of the National Roma Platform are convened by the National Roma Contact Point at least once per year. The membership size as well as the duration and frequency of these meetings can vary, but the Platforms usually focus on:

- Monitoring the implementation of national Roma inclusion strategies and related initiatives
- Discussing key obstacles and policy priorities (at national, regional and local level)
- Exchanging positive practices (projects, awareness-raising activities)
- Promoting EU and national funding opportunities

In terms of thematic areas, an emphasis is placed on the four 'action pillars' of the EU Framework on National Roma Integration Strategies: housing, health, employment and education. Additionally, combating Anti-Gypsyism is becoming increasingly important.

² According to Eurodiaconia's most recent information (10/2017), National Roma Platforms have already been fully set up in Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Finland, Greece and Spain. The following countries are due to receive EC support to develop a NRP: Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia and Romania. It is unclear how national consultation processes are currently structured in these countries. The European Commission has announced its commitment to ensuring that National Roma Platforms will eventually be established in all EU Member States. A similar development is likely foreseen for the enlargement countries.



How can members get involved?

National Roma Platforms can represent an important opportunity for Eurodiaconia members to establish a closer link to their National Roma Contact Point, to contribute to monitoring the implementation of national Roma inclusion strategies, to share policy recommendations and project examples, to find out about upcoming funding opportunities and to connect with experts from other organisations and sectors.

In case you would be interested in participating in a National Roma Platform, the first step would be to reach out to your National Roma Contact Point and (in case there has been no prior contact) to present the activities of your organization, highlighting their link to the topic of Roma inclusion. Ask your National Roma Contact Point whether a Platform already exists in your country and, if so, how you can get involved. Please note that the inclusion of Roma people, in particular Roma women and youth, in the Platform is particularly encouraged.

YOUR COUNTRY HAS NO ROMA PLATFORM	YOUR COUNTRY HAS A ROMA PLATFORM
In case a National Roma Platform does not (yet) exist in your country, it might be worth advocating for one (as an individual organization or, if possible, through a coalition with other parties):	In case a National Roma Platform already exists in your country or is in the process of being established:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stress the relevance of improved coordination between different stakeholders to enhance mutual transparency and cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ask your National Roma Contact Point to promote this initiative publicly (for example through a dedicated section on the website of the responsible governmental department) in order to increase transparency.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Stress the need to include representatives of Roma communities in decision-making processes, and the added value which a regular dialogue platform could have for ensuring the effective implementation of national inclusion strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In case there is a dedicated mailing list announcing the date of upcoming meetings and providing funding updates, ask to be added to the list.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Keep in mind that EU funds are available for the establishment of National Roma Platforms – whether your national government chooses to establish a Platform is not a matter of financial resources, but of political will. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Try to push for meetings which go beyond one-off exchanges on particular topics without concrete recommendations for follow-up actions. National Roma Platforms are intended to directly support the development and implementation of Roma inclusion strategies at national level – meetings should therefore be set up in a way to feed into national policy-making processes.

In case you have any further questions on the National Roma Platforms or on ways to become involved, please contact Anne-Sophie Wislocki from the Eurodiaconia secretariat at anne-sophie.wislocki@eurodiaconia.org. We would also be very interested in hearing your experiences in reaching out to your National Roma Contact Point, or in being a member of a National Roma Platform.