



**Commissioner Věra Jourová**  
**European Commission**  
Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and  
Gender Equality

## Re: Eurodiaconia reaction to the Midterm review of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies

Brussels, 14 December 2017

Dear Commissioner Jourová,

On behalf of Eurodiaconia, I hereby would like to follow up on the Commission's Midterm review of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. Eurodiaconia is a dynamic, Europe-wide community of social and health care organisations founded in the Christian faith and working in the tradition of diaconal service, which are committed to promoting social justice. The network represents 45 members working in 32 countries, including churches, not-for-profit welfare organisations and NGOs and has been actively involved in the promotion of Roma inclusion across Europe since 2010.

Eurodiaconia and its members welcome the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) as a key tool to bring Roma inclusion higher onto the political agenda, and to promote a more effective and integrated response to destitution among Roma across Europe. The Eurodiaconia network shares the Commission's analysis that progress in Roma inclusion has been limited to some improvements in the area of education. Therefore, we believe that efforts need to be significantly stepped up in all other areas of the Framework. Furthermore, Eurodiaconia and its members regret that Anti-Gypsyism is not a 'pillar' of the Framework for NRIS, as it is a central element for achieving Roma inclusion.

Building on those observations and following-up on Eurodiaconia's contribution to the public consultation in October 2017, we would like to share a number of key recommendations with you:

### 1) *Strengthen the emphasis on fighting Anti-Gypsyism*

In recent years Anti-Gypsyism has been increasingly recognised as a key obstacle to the long-term inclusion of Roma in society. Anti-Gypsyism has an adverse effect on the image of Roma in public discourse, it prevents equal opportunities in education and on the labour market, it obstructs Roma communities' hope for change, and it undermines the political willingness of decision-makers to (openly) take positive action. **Therefore, Eurodiaconia calls on the European Commission to broaden the scope of the current EU Framework on NRIS by including Anti-Gypsyism as a horizontal aspect for all future action.**

### 2) *Improve the use of EU funds for Roma inclusion*

EU funds are a crucial tool for the European Commission to support Member States' efforts in improving Roma inclusion. However, it needs to be ensured that the funds benefit those who need the support most. **The Eurodiaconia network calls on the European Commission to design and use EU funding tools in a way that allows to combine mainstream support with specific support measures for Roma. Funds should in particular support desegregation measures, investment in affordable housing benefitting also Roma communities, improve access to healthcare and empower Roma women and girls.**

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### 3) *Support Roma inclusion through the European Semester and the European Pillar of Social Rights*

The European Semester has become an essential tool to support inclusive growth all over Europe and should be further used to support the economic and social inclusion of disadvantaged groups, such as the Roma people. The newly proclaimed European Pillar of Social Rights must also be linked to the National Roma Integration Strategies so that there is policy coherence in all areas. **Eurodiaconia calls on the European Commission to make use of the European Semester and the European Pillar of Social Rights to increase the impetus on Member States to support Roma inclusion in all fields of the EU Framework on National Roma Integration Strategies.**

### 4) *Foster stakeholder coordination and transparency*

Eurodiaconia believes that structural dialogue with a broad range of stakeholders, including (pro-) Roma civil society organisations, is of key importance to promote Roma inclusion in an effective and coherent manner. We therefore welcome the establishment of National Roma Platforms, but regret that a lack of publicly available information is currently preventing many (pro-) Roma civil society organisations of getting involved. **Eurodiaconia, therefore, calls on the European Commission to facilitate meaningful (pro-) Roma civil society involvement in policy development and monitoring through better information and outreach of National Roma Platforms in all EU Member States and candidate countries.**

We thank you for your interest in our work and for the attention you will be giving to this letter, and in doing so, for the consideration you are giving to our members' work and experience. We hope that you will give the issues highlighted in this letter careful consideration in the further development of Roma inclusion policies. My team and I remain available to discuss further these points or how our organisation can support you in working together for a more inclusive European Union.

Yours sincerely,



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