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REPORT

on the social situation of the Roma and their improved access to the labour market in the EU
(2008/2137(INI))

Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

Rapporteur: Magda Kósáné Kovács

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MOTION FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION

on the social situation of the Roma and improving their access to the labour market in the EU (2008/2137(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to Articles 3, 6, 7, 29 and 149 of the EC Treaty, which require Member States to ensure equal opportunities for all citizens,
- having regard to Article 13 of the EC Treaty, which enables the Community to take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin,
- having regard to its resolutions of 28 April 2005 on the situation of the Roma in the European Union¹, of 1 June 2006 on the situation of Roma women in the European Union², of 31 January 2008 on a European strategy on the Roma³ and of 10 July 2008 on the census of the Roma on the basis of ethnicity in Italy⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 October 2008 on promoting social inclusion and combating poverty, including child poverty, in the EU⁵,
- having regard to Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin⁶ and Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation⁷,
- having regard to the Commission communication entitled, 'Renewed social agenda: opportunities, access and solidarity in 21st century Europe' (COM(2008)0412) (the Commission Communication on a Renewed Social Agenda),
- having regard to the Commission proposal for a Council directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (COM(2008)0426),
- having regard to its position of 17 June 2008 on the proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010)¹,

¹ OJ C 45 E, 23.2.2006, p. 129.

² OJ C 298 E, 8.12.2006, p. 283.

³ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0035..

⁴ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0361.

⁵ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0467.

⁶ OJ L 180, 19.7.2000, p. 22.

⁷ OJ L 303, 2.12.2000, p. 16.

¹ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0286.

- having regard to its resolution of 23 May 2007 on promoting decent work for all¹,
- having regard to the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of 1 February 1995 and to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms,
- having regard to the United Nations (UN) Convention of 10 December 1984 against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment,
- having regard to the Action Plan of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within the OSCE Area adopted on the 27 November 2003,
- having regard to the 2007 annual report on racism and xenophobia in the Member States of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights ,
- having regard to the Declaration of the Decade of Roma Inclusion of the 2 February 2005 and the foundation of the Roma Education Fund on 12 May 2005,
- having regard to the report entitled, 'The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union', published by the Commission in 2004,
- having regard to the report, 'Ethnic Minorities in the Labour Market: An Urgent Call for Better Social Inclusion' of the High Level Advisory Group of Experts on the Social Integration of Ethnic Minorities and their Full Participation in the Labour Market, published by the Commission in 2007,
- having regard to the Final Report on the Human Rights Situation of the Roma, Sinti and Travellers in Europe, published by the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe in 2006,
- having regard to the opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee entitled 'Integration of minorities', dated 9 July 2008 (EESC Opinion),
- having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
- having regard to the report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the opinion of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (A6-0038/2009),

A. whereas following the recent enlargements, the need for social integration has created new challenges in the European Union, which have to be dealt with in the context of new demographic and economic circumstances and whereas although those challenges have to be tackled in all Member States, the Member States in central and eastern Europe suffer are more affected because of their structural, economic and social transformation over the last twenty years; notes, therefore, that vulnerable social groups, such as Roma, are in the most endangered situation,

¹ OJ C 102 E, 24.4.2008, p. 321.

- B. whereas in Member States where industrial sectors have collapsed, regions have seen their prospects of development decline and, as a result, many Roma in particular have been forced to the margins of society through the rapid escalation of poverty; whereas Parliament notes and reiterates that, in this process, the national citizenship and citizenship of the Union of the Roma have become devalued and that the benefits flowing from enlargement have not reached them in an appropriate way, causing a deepening of their marginalisation in several ways, increasing the risk they face of multiple discrimination,
- C. whereas the strategic political offensive to promote equal opportunities for Roma has to contend with an extremely complex social situation, as the Roma, Europe's largest ethnic minority, shares the disadvantages of other groups, and whereas this struggle could most effectively be assisted by a comprehensive Roma strategy and by a coordinated set of instruments extending to a range of sectoral policies and with the aid of financing for them,
- D. whereas travellers constitute a separate ethnic phenomenon, which could justifiably be discussed as a separate issue from the point of view both of human rights and of social and labour-market issues,
- E. whereas the process of integrating the Roma population into society is not unilateral but multilateral and there is a need for the Roma to be actively involved in the decision-making process when social inclusion policies are drawn up,
- F. whereas the living conditions of Roma, their health status and their level of schooling determine their social and labour-market situation and often serve as pretexts for their exclusion from majority societies and for racism, and whereas all this hampers improvements to the quality of life, thus preventing the exercise of the most fundamental human and civil rights,
- G. whereas poor transport infrastructure, a dearth of public administrative bodies and services, in particular of high-quality educational institutions and health provision and the relocation of businesses compel young people to move away from home for economic reasons, aggravating regional disparities and ghettoisation,
- H. whereas according to numerous documents, just before the end of the second period of the Lisbon Process it is imperative to assess the social situation and employment prospects of the Roma and decide on what should be done,
- I. acknowledging the importance of the Structural and Cohesion Funds in promoting integration and noting that, because of the complexity of social problems, it is not conceivable that they can be solved purely by means of the project system characteristic of the Structural and Cohesion Funds,
- J. whereas it is unquestionably important to acknowledge previous good practices, but whereas their validity is limited in time and place,
- K. whereas many Roma communities currently tend to remain immobile, rather than moving to areas where greater job opportunities may exist,

Roma on the labour market: access or exclusion?

1. Considers that there is a need for a coordinated approach to improving the working and living conditions of the Roma community that aims at the following three objectives:
 - increasing economic opportunities for the Roma;
 - building human capital, and;
 - strengthening social capital and community development;
2. Points to the fact that policies targeting the Roma have, in a number of cases, not improved their situation; requests that, in all EU and Member State actions which particularly affect Roma, the stakeholders of the Roma community participate as decision-makers, so that their capacity and responsibility for organising themselves is respected;
3. Notes that the unequal access to services and the socioeconomic disadvantages facing Roma children in practice put early development and high-quality education out of their reach; notes that those disadvantages in turn negatively effect their emotional, social, physical and personal development as well as their subsequent chances on the labour market and hence their integration into the mainstream society;
4. Notes that education systems are selective and that despite the efforts of the Member States to overcome segregation, the many and varied systems ostensibly designed to tackle segregation actually often serve to accentuate disparities between social groups and profoundly disadvantage the poor, in particular the Roma, who find themselves on a downward spiral; stresses, therefore, the need for targeted education policies which address Roma families and encourage active participation;
5. Stresses that, although the proportion of Roma young people in secondary and higher education has increased in certain Member States, their level of qualifications still remains far below the EU average; points to the gap between labour shortages on the one hand and a high unemployment rate linked with low skill levels among Roma on the other; demands, therefore, that the Member States and the EU support the Roma to increase their qualifications as a priority; draws attention to the fact that, in the absence of formal qualifications, the position of Roma on the labour market can also be improved by devising a system for acknowledging practical skills;
6. Urges the Member States to guarantee that Roma women and girls have access on equal terms to quality education and to introduce incentives (e.g. professional development opportunities) to attract high-quality teachers to schools in more deprived socio-economic areas, especially in rural communities with a large proportion of Roma inhabitants;
7. Calls on the Member States to improve access for Roma women to vocational training, and adjust vocational training to the needs of local labour markets in order to provide Roma women with marketable skills;
8. Notes that the vast majority of Roma graduates do not return to their communities after leaving university and that some of them deny their origins or are no longer accepted in their community when they attempt to return;
9. Recommends that a comprehensive programme package be planned which will promote and motivate Roma graduates' return to their community and employment within their community and in its interests;

10. Considers it to be a fact that the Roma citizens in some Member States influence the population pyramid in a specific way; notes that the proportion of Roma children in the population is high, while their life expectancy at birth is a full 10 years less than that of people belonging to the majority population;
11. Considers that although the Member States have used substantial EU and Member-State resources to help the long-term unemployed to find work, no coherent solution has yet been found at EU level: Member States are tackling the situation in very different ways and to very different extents, and have not provided opportunities to return to the labour market long-term, while their measures, such as public employment programmes, have further aggravated the stigmatisation of the Roma; requests, therefore, that both the EU and the Member States change their policy to an integrated approach that addresses all aspects of their deprivation;
12. Calls on the Member States to adjust vocational training programmes to the needs of local labour markets and give incentives to employers who provide unskilled people (including Roma people) with work and offer them training and opportunities to acquire practical experience directly in the workplace;
13. Calls on national and local authorities to deliver annual gender disaggregated assessments of the rate of re-employment among the long-term unemployed (thus including Roma people) who have completed labour market training and, based on the experience gained, to draw up new methodologies and launch training programmes adapted to local abilities and economic needs;
14. Calls on the Member States to use EU funds to preserve and protect traditional Roma activities;
15. Endorses the view taken by the Commission that Roma adults, due to their multiple disadvantages, are under-represented in the working population and in lifelong learning, often do not have access to ICT, and are over-represented among the long-term unemployed and those working on low-prestige occupations, which create the greatest barriers of their reintegration into the labour market; calls, therefore, for the effective implementation of Directive 2000/78/EC, which prohibits discrimination in employment and occupation on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation;
16. Considers it important to provide for specific Community action to promote access to professional training programmes by Roma;
17. Draws it to the attention of the Member States that this social dichotomy may compel many Roma job-seekers to transfer from the legal to the informal economy, and that a coordinated effort is needed at EU and Member State level to entice those employees back into legal employment with work-related and social security rights;
18. Considers that steps should be taken to promote an inclusive social and economic policy, including through ad hoc measures to provide decent housing;

19. Draws particular attention to the fact that encouraging unqualified and unskilled labour mobility may lead to worse discrimination against Roma women who are already extremely vulnerable to multiple discrimination, and may hinder their further progress in the labour market;
20. Calls on the governments of the Member States to improve Roma women's economic independence by promoting easy self-employment and start-up measures for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), access to micro-credits, and by stimulating a service economy within their own settlements to expand Roma women's knowledge and expertise;
21. Calls on the governments of the Member States to generate incentive systems, inter alia, through fiscal advantages, for undertakings that employ Roma women;
22. Considers it necessary to take account of the fact that, in practice, the elimination of Roma settlements is difficult to achieve using EU resources under the rules which currently apply to the European Regional Development Fund, as, in the case of Member States which acceded after 2004, the minimum population figure for the eligibility of settlements for financing from housing budgets is such that it is precisely those living under the worst conditions, in the smallest settlements, who cannot be reached;
23. Underlines the fact that the solution to the social and economic problems of the Roma calls for a comprehensive approach and a long-term, coordinated solution, involving housing, education, health-care and labour market policies; therefore suggests to the Commission and the Member States that all measures intended to improve the situation of the Roma should be considered as an inseparable part of the measures designed to support regional development and social inclusion;
24. Considers that the Member States should exploit the revision of the rules governing the Structural and Cohesion Funds which affords more scope for complex programmes by allowing more than 10 % to be transferred between the Structural and Cohesion Funds;
25. Welcomes the proposal for a comprehensive new directive to combat discrimination outside employment on the grounds of age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief and calls for the effective implementation of Directive 2000/43/EC; considers that, in the spirit of the Social Agenda, the Commission should identify specific objectives and draw up well-balanced programmes with the aim of eliminating discrimination against and stigmatisation of the Roma and criminalisation of Roma communities;
26. Stresses that the basic prerequisite for promoting social inclusion and access to the labour market for the Roma is that they be given equal social and political rights; calls on the Member States and candidate countries, in this connection, to establish a strategy to improve the participation of the Roma in elections as voters and candidates at all levels;
27. Endorses the importance of micro-credits, which are recommended from various points of view in the Commission Communication on a Renewed Social Agenda Social Agenda and the EESC Opinion and which, by providing a minimal resource, can set the poorest of the poor on the road to personal responsibility, business skills and development of their creative powers, including by providing credit to cover the individual's own share of the cost of self-employment;

28. Supports the proposal by the EU institutions that, with request to the principle of equal treatment, the number of Roma working in public services should be increased; points out, however, that in order to make this possible it is necessary not only for governments to pursue personnel and labour-force training policies which promote it but also to make special efforts and provide active support to facilitate public acceptance of the principle;
29. Stresses that the social market, health care, domestic help, the public catering and the provision of services in support of child care etc. may create new jobs for Roma people who are unemployed, particularly women; reaffirms, however, that the social market requires a permanent link between the provider and the user of services and that, therefore, an increase in the employment of Roma in those fields is possible only in a context of social acceptance, but that such employment also promotes social acceptance;
30. Calls on the Member States to take appropriate measures to eliminate racial hatred and incitement to discrimination and violence against the Roma in the media and every form of communication technology, and urges the mass media to establish good practices with respect to staff recruitment in such a way as to reflect the make-up of the population as a whole;
31. Observes that Roma women are often actors in the informal economy and have a very low employment rate and considers that, to overcome multiple discrimination, high unemployment and poverty, targeted policies should focus on creating real access to the labour market for Roma women, which is a prerequisite for improving their social and family status
32. Considers that the employment of Roma women should also be promoted by means of employment-friendly operation of social support systems and appropriate training and specialisation opportunities, to prepare them in the long term for work from which they can earn a living and make it possible to reconcile family life and work; calls on Member States to adopt measures which help to increase child-care opportunities for Roma children even if their mother is at home with her other children;
33. Stresses that better housing and healthcare services could improve Roma women's access to the labour market and increase their chances of keeping their jobs for longer;
34. Points out that social and employment policies should contribute to the individual potentials and needs of citizens and create more opportunities for the largest pool of labour such as older people, people with disabilities and poor, unskilled people, including Roma;
35. Points out that the multiple discrimination faced by Roma women should also be recognised and specifically addressed in policies targeting Roma women that could have a double, long-term positive impact on them and other family members, in particular children;
36. Opposes the view that subsidies designed to help the long-term unemployed (including many Roma) to find work, whether paid to employers or employees, violate the principle of competitive neutrality, as the reintegration of the Roma is a social policy objective for the pursuit of which it is necessary to create subsidised market positions; expresses the view that subsidising jobs on the labour market in order to reintegrate Roma workers is preferable to subsidising the long-term unemployed;

37. Recognises that some traditional Roma occupations, such as arts and crafts, can help both to preserve this community's specific characteristics and improve its material situation and level of social integration, and considers it desirable to support some specific professional activities;

The struggle to survive on the margins of society

38. Notes that among the European Union's cultures, that of the Roma is marked by a strong family tradition; observes that the image of Roma families in public opinion features an emphasis on traditional gender roles, large numbers of children, cohabitation of several generations, the tendency of relatives to live close together, and extensive cultivation of relationships, and that therefore, in EU and Member State programmes for Roma families, it is necessary to build on the strengths of this natural support network;

39. Highlights the importance of conserving and affirming the specific cultural characteristics of the Roma in order to protect their own identity and reduce prejudices against this minority, and therefore considers it necessary for the Member States and the Commission to play a more active part in supporting the spiritual life of the Roma minority;

40. Endorses the EESC Opinion that Roma women have a low status in family hierarchy, are married early, often suffer domestic violence, and are often victims of prostitution and human trafficking;

41. Considers therefore that EU and Member State programmes for the Roma should aim at individual emancipation from traditional hierarchies and the socioeconomic independence of members of Roma communities, especially women;

42. Points out that Roma children's tendency to leave school early damages their personal education, social integration and opportunities on the labour market, whilst in the case of Roma women, their physical and psychological health and the fact that they leave school early also affects the health and schooling of their children, facilitating their social exclusion; therefore stresses the importance of services which increase awareness in the provision of information to Roma women;

43. Urges the Member States to guarantee that existing and future legal frameworks include provisions for preventing and addressing the multiple forms of discrimination faced by Roma women in order to improve their socio-economic status and to ensure their access to high-quality health care, child care and education as preconditions for employment;

44. Considers that the process of integration must be initiated at an early stage in life, in order effectively to provide alternatives to poverty and social exclusion; so it is necessary to provide an institutional framework for community-based social and educational services for children and families which meet regional and personal needs, guaranteeing equal access to high-quality services; calls on the Commission, therefore, to provide particular support for programmes for the early integration of Roma children in all countries where EU resources such as the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance or the Structural and Cohesion Funds, can be accessed;

45. Notes that Roma children are over-represented in special schools, that a large proportion

of them are assigned to such schools without justification, mostly on account of discrimination; points out that forcing children who have been unlawfully classed as 'mentally disabled' to attend special schools is discriminatory and seriously violates their fundamental right to quality education and gives rise to difficulties in further study and in finding work and to greater inactivity, at the same time forming a burden on budgets;

46. Endorses the EESC Opinion that, in the interests of the development of young children, complex forms of aid are required which are aimed at the whole family and which, while geared to the needs of the family, provide tailor-made practical assistance, such as the 'sure start' programme;
47. Endorses the EESC Opinion that the Roma community – due to its demographic characteristics – has asymmetrical access to social benefits; stresses that social benefits are intended to counterbalance the burdens or lacks arising from individual life situation, the commitment of looking after children and other socially useful commitments;
48. Endorses the EESC Opinion that, in order to promote participation in the official labour market, supplementary support should be provided to those changing jobs; stresses that declared work must be rendered desirable to both employees and employers;
49. Stresses that the part of their active lives which Roma have spent in a state of exclusion hinders their access to healthcare services and is responsible for their situation in old age, and starting work at an early age, frequent unemployment, a lack of employment protection, invisible work performed in the informal economy, which is often physically onerous, while there is no pension cover arising from such periods of employment, all act to prevent Roma from drawing proper pensions and from leading a dignified old age;
50. Recommends that the Commission take the initiative to identify the most efficient ways of supporting the social, economic and cultural integration of the largest minority in the European Union, and stresses the need for cooperation between the Commission and the Member State governments in order to take specific action aimed at resolving the complex transnational problems of the Roma;

Conclusions

51. Considers that preserving Roma language and culture is a European value; does not, however, endorse the idea of a stateless 'European nation', because this would absolve Member States of responsibility and call into question the possibility of integration;
52. Draws the Member States' attention to the risk that adopting excessive measures as regards Roma communities could lead to a worsening of the minority's already dramatic situation and could jeopardise their chances of integration;
53. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to work with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Roma communities and leaders in order to develop a jointly acceptable plan for the social inclusion of Roma to be implemented in close partnership;
54. Calls on the Member States to design and implement projects intended to combat negative stereotypes of the Roma at all levels which can be supported by the Structural and

Cohesion Funds and also by specific programmes such as Progress and initiatives such as the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogues and the forthcoming 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion;

55. Observes that, whereas the improvement of the social and economic situation of the Roma was a significant consideration in the enlargement process, progress has generally been limited; calls on the Member States and the Commission to review previous and existing programmes and initiatives and evaluate their results; considers that the European Union has a duty to coordinate instruments of social inclusion better and more closely and that this should help to combat poverty, promote Roma access to better, longer-lasting and more stable employment, pave the way for efforts to render social inclusion and protection systems more effective, and be a means of analysing political experience and mutual learning and create a system for coherent analysis of best practices;
56. Calls on the Commission to assess specifically the impact of the objectives and instruments of each of its sectoral policies on the Roma, along with developing a coherent political strategy and achieving a high level of coordination; calls on the Commission to ask Member States, in reports on integrated indicators and on the open method of coordination for social inclusion, to devote attention to changing the situation of Roma; calls on the Commission to monitor the extent of discrimination, regularly assess the situation of the Roma with regard to the changes in the education, employment, social, health and housing in the Member States and in the acceding countries;
57. Calls on the Commission to ask the Member States to adopt clear employment policies for disadvantaged groups, including the active Roma population, as soon as possible, with support measures to facilitate their phased integration into the labour market, measures that will combat the effects of dependence created by the social security system;
58. Calls on the Commission to cooperate with the various international organisations and support the development of an academic network of Roma experts that would provide scientific data and support, through research, analysis, the accumulation of evidence and the drafting of recommendations, in order to analyse the issues related to the integration of the Roma question, decide agendas, describe Roma issues with due seriousness on the basis of the summary reports drawn up by those organisations, and draw up an overall EU assessment at least every two years;
59. Criticises the four Member States that have not yet ratified the 1995 Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities; calls on those four Member States - France, Greece, Belgium and Luxemburg - to ratify the Convention urgently; calls on the Member States that have issued restrictive declarations under the Framework Convention affecting the recognition of the Roma as a national minority to withdraw those declarations;
60. Recommends that Member States
 - (a) create an EU-level expert group including representatives of the Roma to coordinate Member States' Roma strategy and the use of EU funds for its promotion;
 - (b) establish partnerships between the various organisations representing Roma interests and the appropriate institutions of the Member States;
 - (c) devise instruments such as concessionary credit or public grants and that, in the

planning of farm subsidies, make it an important objective to enable Roma citizens to attain conditions in which they can earn a living from farming; so that, in addition to or instead of seeking paid employment in farming, they would be open to the idea of seeking innovative forms of agricultural work, including social cooperatives, thus justifying the provision of the necessary resources;

61. Considers that in some Member States the target groups (in settlements or parts of settlements) can be approached effectively using the 'multiple disadvantages' definition, but that it is difficult to reach smaller units such as the family and the individual through that category;
62. Considers, however, that the legal preconditions should be created for the initiation of voluntary and anonymous data collection and the creation of a comparable database, with due regard for data protection and human rights protection rules and without resorting to methods which violate human dignity; considers that the Commission should take steps to bring about the requisite amendments to legislation;
63. Calls on the Commission to facilitate the drawing-up, verification and confirmation of a portfolio of best practices in programmes for Roma, as regards, inter alia, housing, education and employment, following analyses carried out by an independent body;
64. Considers that creating the database is not an alternative but a precondition for a system of assessment and evaluation which can weigh up the impact of exchanges of best experiences and of the use of resources; believes that, to this end, an indicator system is needed which extends to all areas of life and can be used by everybody, which, in addition to output and input indicators for programmes, also concerns the use of social result and impact indicators, including as a condition for financing; recommends, therefore, that the Commission establish this system of indicators in the Framework Regulation on Structural Funds and in the regulations relating to other types of public grant;
65. Recommends that the Commission adopt more consistent and uniform expectations of all development programmes financed from EU resources from which it is possible to demand an account of the prevention or reversal of social exclusion of the Roma; considers that Member State and EU bodies should examine all development which is financed from the Structural and Cohesion Funds from the point of view of the impact which the programme has on the social integration of the Roma; recommends further that in the case of every programme at the selection stage priority should be assigned to those developments which are also designed to improve the situation of Roma living in particularly disadvantaged settlements and those who are poor and unemployed;
66. Calls the Commission, in cooperation with each Member State, to develop and implement a wide-reaching information campaign addressed to the general public and the Roma people about national programmes in the Member States for improving the living conditions of the Roma and their implementation on an ongoing basis;
67. Calls on the Commission to carry out ongoing monitoring of measures and activities and their impacts on the improvement of the position of the Roma in the labour market;

68. Would like resources on which decisions are taken at EU level to be used, inter alia, for 'targeted' programmes that also involve experts from organisations with experience in this area who would provide support and advice, to counterbalance Roma disadvantages in education and qualifications; considers that the Member States, in allocating EU funds and their own funds, should, when deciding on funding of fields other than early development and public education, give consideration to whether local government bodies, organisations, etc., which have applied for support, have complied with their obligations to eliminate segregation;
69. Calls the Commission to encourage national authorities to cease the discriminatory practice of evicting occupants of Roma slums and instead develop concrete housing projects with the support of the technical expertise and monitoring mechanisms of, inter alia, the Commission, the World Bank and NGOs focusing on the Roma; believes that solving the housing problems of Roma living in rural areas must be a priority and should become a matter of special concern and an area for action;
70. Calls on the Commission to devote particular attention not only to civil society organisations but to the Roma's capacity for organising themselves and providing support for integration policy, to support the development of communities particularly by means of projects which increase Roma participation in the decision-making process and their responsibility for decisions taken in concert with them;
71. Calls on the Commission and the Member States in cooperation with NGOs focusing on the Roma to examine existing policies and programmes in order to draw lessons from the failed projects of the past;
72. Calls on the Commission to support NGOs focusing on Roma, at EU, national and local level, in order to monitor the implementation of policies and programmes intended for Roma, as well as Community education for democracy and human rights;
73. Proposes that the Commission and the Member States establish an EU-wide forum in which social movements, trade unions and NGOs representing the Roma and their interests can consult one another on a permanent basis in order to draw up guidelines and exchange good practices, with a view to promoting a coordinated approach at EU level;
74. Calls on the Member States to be more proactive in encouraging the transferral of jobs to where the Roma communities are situated, as well as in encouraging Roma to move to where the jobs are situated;
75. Reminds Member States and the Commission that, whilst social welfare has a key role to play in supporting and strengthening disadvantaged communities such as the Roma, the promotion of self help is also important; considers that a culture of independence, rather than dependence, should be the long-term aim;
76. Considers that much greater priority should be given to the provision of local jobs and the encouragement of entrepreneurship and local artisans, as well as the development of the basic skills to fulfil them, so that greater wealth as well as greater self-worth may develop;

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77. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and the parliaments of the Member States and the candidate countries.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The conditions in which Europe's largest minority lives can unquestionably be described as being on a par with those found in the developing world. This is true not only of educational, housing, health, employment and other indicators but also in the sense that, without immediate, concentrated and targeted external assistance, these approximately 10-12 million people have no chance of escaping from poverty and exclusion. Such a degree of social disadvantage hampers the attainment of a basic level of human dignity and equal opportunities for the Roma.

It is decades since Europe moved on from a period when it could observe from a safe distance within its own territory such huge numbers of people languishing in a state of complete social deprivation, inherited from generation to generation, who at the same time possess such economic potential. We might think that there would be an opportunity to change the situation of the Roma substantially when a country as a whole is on an upward trend of economic development. There is no level of economic development where the automatic operation of redistributive systems has created true opportunities for mobility for the huge numbers of people living on the very bottom rung of the social ladder: indeed, often they actually increase relative poverty. Moreover, this is accentuated by the fact that the degree of integration of the Roma and their economic and social situation differs greatly between countries.

The institutions' policy on the Roma primarily regards the integration of the Roma as a regional matter for the new Member States and candidate Member States. The events of the recent past in certain old Member States remind us that the plight of the Roma is a European issue. Responsibility is borne in common, primarily because, in the new Member States and the candidate Member States, the situation of the Roma has not fundamentally changed since enlargement or in anticipation thereof; their integration has come to a standstill or not even begun, as a result of which an unprecedented exodus of Roma people to the old Member States is beginning. In the countries to which they are moving in search of a new homeland, they represent a new type of challenge to integration policy, as without a genuine intention of acceptance and an integration strategy, they will be just as marginalised and defenceless as in the country they came from.

One reflection of the extremist views which are being more openly expressed by the day is the fact that hatred of gypsies is growing throughout Europe. Unless we sit up and take due notice of this, it could easily happen that, despite all efforts, the European Union, rather than becoming an association which absorbs groups and gives them equal rights, may cast in stone existing conflicts and disparities.

If we take seriously one of the most important intentions of the European Union's founders, namely that it should become a worthy economic competitor to the USA and Asia, it is obvious that neither national governments nor the European Union itself must allow themselves not to integrate immediately such a large potential work force, with several centuries' experience of adaptation and survival.

6.11.2008

OPINION OF THE COMMITTEE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on Social situation of the Roma and their improved access to the labour market in the EU
(2008/2137(INI))

Rapporteur: Lívía Járóka

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality calls on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions in its motion for a resolution:

1. Urges the Member States to guarantee that existing and future legal frameworks include provisions for preventing and addressing the multiple forms of discrimination faced by Roma women in order to improve their socio-economic status and to ensure their access to quality health care, child care and education as preconditions for employment;
2. Urges the Member States to guarantee that Roma women and girls have access on equal terms to quality education and to introduce incentives (e.g. professional development opportunities) to attract high-quality teachers to schools in more deprived socio-economic areas, especially in rural communities with a large proportion of Roma inhabitants;
3. Calls on the Member States to improve access for Roma women to vocational training, and adjust vocational training to the needs of local labour markets in order to provide Roma women with marketable skills;
4. Calls for the reinforcement of Roma women's organisations, with a view to tackling problems at local, national and EU levels and promoting social and cultural dialogue;
5. Calls on the Member States to consider measures intended to promote family planning, alternative arrangements to early marriages and sex education, in order to fully respect the human dignity and freedom of, and to improve social and family status of, *Roma* women and girls ;
6. Urges the Member States to tackle very high unemployment rates among Roma women, and in particular to eliminate the serious barriers posed by direct discrimination in recruitment procedures;

7. Draws special attention to the fact that encouraging unqualified and unskilled labour mobility may lead to worse discrimination against Roma women who are extremely vulnerable to multiple discrimination, and hinder their further progress in the labour market;
8. Calls on the governments of the Member States to improve Roma women's economic independence by promoting easy self-employment start-up of SMEs, access to micro-credits, and by stimulating a service economy within their own settlements to expand Roma women's knowledge and expertise;
9. Urges the Council and Commission to encourage governments to collect and publish – without threatening individual identification – data disaggregated by sex and ethnicity in areas of relevance to the social inclusion of the Roma;
10. Calls on the governments of the Member States to generate an incentive system (fiscal and others) for undertakings that employ Roma women;
11. Urges the Commission and the Member States to involve Roma organisations, and especially those involving Roma women, in decision-making processes, and communities as a whole in the implementation of specific policies;
12. Stresses that better housing and healthcare services could improve Roma women's access to the labour market and increase their chances of keeping their jobs for longer.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	6.11.2008
Result of final vote	+: 26 -: 0 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Emine Bozkurt, Věra Flasarová, Claire Gibault, Lissy Gröner, Zita Gurmai, Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou, Urszula Krupa, Roselyne Lefrançois, Astrid Lulling, Siiri Oviir, Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou, Zita Pleštinská, Anni Podimata, Raül Romeva i Rueda, Eva-Britt Svensson, Britta Thomsen, Anne Van Lancker, Anna Záborská, Iva Zanicchi
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Lena Ek, Iratxe García Pérez, Donata Gottardi, Mary Honeyball, Christa Klaß, Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Maria Petre
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	Inger Segelström

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	21.1.2009
Result of final vote	+: 42 -: 3 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Jan Andersson, Edit Bauer, Iles Braghetto, Philip Bushill-Matthews, Milan Cabrnach, Alejandro Cercas, Ole Christensen, Derek Roland Clark, Luigi Cocilovo, Jean Louis Cottigny, Jan Cremers, Harald Ettl, Richard Falbr, Carlo Fatuzzo, Ilda Figueiredo, Joel Hasse Ferreira, Roger Helmer, Stephen Hughes, Ona Juknevičienė, Jean Lambert, Raymond Langendries, Bernard Lehideux, Elizabeth Lynne, Thomas Mann, Maria Matsouka, Csaba Óry, Siiri Oviir, Marie Panayotopoulos-Cassiotou, Pier Antonio Panzeri, Rovana Plumb, Bilyana Ilieva Raeva, Elisabeth Schroedter, José Albino Silva Peneda, Kathy Sinnott, Jean Spautz, Anne Van Lancker, Gabriele Zimmer
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Françoise Castex, Richard Howitt, Rumiana Jeleva, Magda Kósáné Kovács, Sepp Kusstatscher, Adrian Manole, Viktória Mohácsi, Csaba Sógor