



## **International Roma Day: Statement by First Vice-President Frans Timmermans and Commissioners Marianne Thyssen, Věra Jourová, Corina Crețu and Johannes Hahn**

Brussels, 6 April 2018

Ahead of International Roma Day, taking place every year on 8 April, First Vice-President Frans Timmermans and Commissioners Marianne Thyssen, Věra Jourová, Corina Crețu and Johannes Hahn stated:

*"Respect for fundamental rights, including equal treatment, is one of the cornerstones of the European Union. Yet, one of the largest minorities in the EU and in its neighbourhood – the Roma community - still does not fully benefit from these rights. Not only do Roma communities suffer prejudice, discrimination and marginalisation, very often they do not even have access to basic provisions such as clean water, sanitation and food. 80% of Roma are at risk of poverty. Such a situation hits Roma first, but it is also a stain on our democratic communities.*

*International Roma Day is therefore an opportunity to build on the positive work done so far to fight discrimination of Roma and to enforce their integration in all European societies and countries. Lately there have been some positive results, in particular in the field of education, but more needs to be done.*

*This quest can only be successful if we all pull together, on all levels. We therefore call upon Member States and our enlargement partners to pursue this quest and take real action on anti-Roma discrimination and marginalisation, including by supporting Roma participation and representation in the public sphere.*

*Roma have been living in Europe for more than 700 years. Roma history and culture form an indispensable part of our diverse European heritage. Roma communities deserve to be treated equally and to enjoy their full rights as Europeans. At the end of the day, the way we include our most vulnerable minorities is an essential test of our European democracy."*

### **Background**

The Roma are Europe's largest minority community – with 6 million Roma living in the EU and 4 million in the enlargement region (Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia–Herzegovina, Kosovo and Turkey).

This community has long faced inequalities, social exclusion, discrimination and marginalisation. 80% of Roma are at risk of poverty, compared to the overall average risk level of 17% in the EU.

The European Commission has long stressed the need for action, and called on Member States in 2011 to adopt national strategies for Roma integration. The Commission reports annually on implementation of these strategies.

In 2017 the Commission launched a comprehensive evaluation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 to assess the impact of measures put in place since 2011. The preliminary findings show that there are some positive improvements, in particular in the field of education, but more needs to be done to advance future efforts in social and economic inclusion of the Roma.

EU Cohesion policy can contribute to this goal, via its investments in healthcare, employment and social integration projects. The ROMACT programme, an initiative set up in 2013 together with the Council of Europe, also helps the Roma community by supporting local authorities in 115 municipalities by designing, funding and implementing policies and public services aimed at creating a more inclusive society for Roma. This programme benefits around 65,000 people.

For the second year in a row, the European Commission joins the initiative of the European Parliament, together with European umbrella civil society organisations, to host a series of events from 8 – 12 April to mark International Roma Day. More information can be found [here](#).

### **For more information**

[European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights' report: A persisting concern: anti-Gypsyism as a](#)

[barrier to Roma inclusion.](#)

[Press Release on the number of Roma facing life like people in the world's poorer countries](#)

[Infographic on barriers to Roma inclusion](#)

[Press release on the evaluation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020](#)

[The European Platform for Roma Inclusion](#)

[ROMACT programme for local authorities](#)

[Commissioner Věra Jourová's closing remarks at Holocaust Remembrance and Roma exhibition](#)

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