



Romani CRISS
Center for Social Intervention and Studies

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Bucharest, March 31st, 2011

To: **The European Commission**
To the attention of: Mr. Jose Manuel Barosso, President
Mrs. Viviane Reding European Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship
Mr. Andor László, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion,
Mr. Françoise Le Bail, Head of the Roma Taskforce and European Commission Director-General for Justice

To: **The Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the European Union**
To the attention of: Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán

To: **The European Parliament**
To the attention of: Mr. Jerzy Buzek, President

CC: Mr. Emil Boc, Prime – Minister of Romania

Ref: EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and the Romanian context

Your Excellency,

On behalf of Romani CRISS¹, an organization that works for defending and promoting the rights of Roma in Romania, we would like to express our high appreciation for making the demarche and initiating the discussion on the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies.

As the following step of this process is the 5th meeting of European Platform for Roma Inclusion in Budapest, scheduled for 7th -8th of April, we express our concern regarding the procedure that

¹ Roma Center for Social Intervention and Studies - Romani CRISS is a non-governmental organization, established on 4th of April 1993. The objective of Romani CRISS is to defend the rights of Roma in Romania. Also, Romani CRISS provides legal assistance in cases of abuse and works for combating and preventing racial discrimination against Roma in all fields of public life, including education, housing and health. At the EU/US Summit of May 18th 1998, in London, Romani CRISS was awarded the Prize for Democracy and Civil Society by the European Union and the United States of America. In January 2008, Romani CRISS was approved as NGO in Consultative Status with Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC). It is the first Roma organisation in Romania and the fifth in the country to be approved in the Consultative Status with ECOSOC.

the Romanian Government has understood to accelerate by adopting a National Strategy for Roma, while neglecting critical stages.

The European Commission has announced a communication on a European Framework for member states' Roma integration strategies, which would be presented to the Council in April, 2011 for deliberation during the June European Council.

On March 9th, 2011 the Romanian Government announced that the Memorandum for the Guidelines on Roma Inclusion 2011-2020 period was approved. Furthermore, the Government has set a deadline for the National Agency for Roma, which was tasked to finalize the National Strategy and the plans of actions within 30 days after the official approval of the Memorandum. However the first meeting of the Inter-ministerial Group took place on March 29th, according to Mr. Ilie Dinca, President of the National Agency for Roma statement and the Strategy was to be finalized by April 15th, 2011. This tight deadline does not create the space for the public debate, as it is stipulated in the Romanian Law no. 52/2003, on the transparency in public administration decision-making, which compels the public institutions to inform and consult the citizens and the associations on the public interest issues which are about to be adopted.

We express our reluctance towards the Romanian Government's genuine commitment for addressing the Roma issue. Our opinion is that the previous Romanian National Strategy for Roma, which came to an end in 2010, should have had an evaluation of its implementation as foregone the work on a new national strategic framework. The Government lacks independent evaluations and institutional audit and it is obvious that the new Strategy is currently being drafted in a hasty, inefficient and unprofessional manner.

We bring to your attention that a wide and real consultation should have been carried out in advance of the adoption of the new National Strategy for Roma. The Romanian Governmental body responsible for the Roma issue, namely the National Agency for Roma, has initiated a superficial process, meant solely to comply with its consultation obligation. The National Agency for Roma started in November 2010 a dialogue with Roma NGOs, regarding the draft for the new National Strategy for Roma. On November 22nd 2010, a meeting was organized by the National Agency for Roma and attended by representatives of civil society. Within the meeting, serious errors were committed by the Governmental body: plans of actions presented as proposals for the new Strategy were establishing deadlines for 2007 and 2008; parts of the documents were copied from the former Strategy; the proposals were not taking into account the new context of economic and social crisis and the lessons learnt from the previous Strategy were completely ignored.

A deeper look into the process leading to the formulation of the plans of actions presented by the National Agency for Roma indicates there are four plans on education, health, employment and housing, including measures mapped out in the previous Strategy as well. However the new developments at national and EU level have been taken into account (e.g. the Roma health mediators are currently under the responsibility of the local municipalities and not under the employment of the County Health Direction of Health Ministry anymore, although the new strategy action plans refer to them as under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health). More worrying is the fact that the Romanian Government's draft plans for a National Strategy developed by the National Agency for Roma did not take into account the recent developments and discussions at EU level regarding the promotion and implementation of integrated programs. Designed to hasten the inclusion of Roma communities, the integrated programs are calling for

cohesive interventions in the areas of housing, education, employment and health, a concept which a copy paste national Strategy is not consistent with. As such the Romanian National Strategy will be out of tune with the EU's efforts to harmonize and design efficient inclusion measures targeting Romanian Roma.

To conclude, considering the significance of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, we call upon the Romanian Government not to develop the related Roma policies in few weeks, start programming the stages according to the EU schedule and assess the European conclusions before adopting a document of such high impact.

We call upon the European Commission, as well as the Hungarian Presidency of the EU, to reject and condemn development of superficial national strategies and plans of action for Roma, as well as to urge the Romanian Government to follow all necessary and crucial steps in order to adopt efficient, professional and results oriented Roma policies.

We are hopeful the EU institutions will be aware of the critical need of intervention for the case of the Romanian Strategy and that a strong monitoring process is required, lead by the European Commission. National Strategies not complying with the approaches, guidelines and methodology promoted by the EU should be revised effective immediately.

Sincerely,

Margareta Matache
Executive Director
Romani CRISS