

Workshop on future policies for Roma

1st October 2019

Jenkins Room, Charlemagne Building

Report

The 1 October workshop on future policies for Roma organized by DG Justice and Consumers was attended by 130 participants, including National Roma Contact Points from the EU and the enlargement region, Members of the European Parliament, representatives from civil society active at the European, national and local levels, representatives from international organisations and staff from the European Commission services. Asked anonymously about their ethnic background¹, 35% of the participants self-identified as being of Roma origin.

Mr Ali Al-Jaberi (Debating Skills) was the moderator of the day.

The agenda was divided into four sessions:

1. Policy options for EU action on Roma equality and inclusion post-2020
2. Measuring progress in Roma equality and inclusion post-2020
3. Fighting antigypsyism and promoting Roma participation post-2020
4. Addressing the diversity within the Roma population post-2020

To facilitate the discussion in the sessions background papers had been prepared in advance and were presented at the beginning of each session, together with a set of questions for the debate: https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-and-eu/roma-integration-eu/workshop-future-policies-roma_en

Welcome by Commissioner Jourová

Ms Vera Jourová, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, welcomed the participants. She stressed that while the EU Framework's ambition of "putting an end to the exclusion of Roma" has not been achieved, the 2018 evaluation of the EU Framework clearly demonstrated its EU added value. Despite many limitations and taking into account the massive tasks involved, the EU Framework has shown positive results and an initial change in trends. Commissioner Jourová stressed, however, that the work is far from done and referred to first results of a new Eurobarometer survey on discrimination showing that Roma are still particularly affected by discrimination. She urged all participants to do more against the persisting socio-economic exclusion of Roma, discrimination and antigypsyism and expressed her wish that the next Commission further strengthens its policies to advance Roma equality and inclusion. She recalled that Ms Helena Dalli had been nominated as Commissioner-designate for Equality and underlined that this new portfolio reflects the high political status given to equality by President-elect von der Leyen as one of the common values at the heart of the European Union.

¹ Via SLIDO

Session 1: Policy options for EU actions on Roma Equality and inclusion post-2020

Results of a first SLIDO question showed that 98% of the participants who replied were of the opinion that a post-2020 EU initiative on Roma equality and inclusion is needed to make more progress.

José-Manuel Fresno, author of the background paper for this first session, recalled the findings of the evaluation of the EU Framework and presented six mutually exclusive basic options for EU action on Roma equality and inclusion post-2020, explaining the rationale of the choice made:

Option 1: No new EU initiative, Option 2: EU Framework is carried forward as it is, Option 3: Antigypsyism approach, Option 4: Anti-poverty approach without specific targeting of Roma, Option 5: A revised EU Framework, Option 6: Broadened approach on equality and inclusion

Mr Fresno also introduced the discussion by presenting problem drivers leading to the marginalization of Roma and thoughts regarding the need for a stronger country differentiation in a post-2020 initiative.

Following his presentation, civil society presented a new option, a combination of options three, five and six (Antigypsyism approach – A revised EU Framework – Broadened approach on equality and inclusion) and took a united position asking for a new Council Recommendation on Roma inclusion and combating antigypsyism. Civil society called for a strengthened rights-based approach, guided by an official working definition of antigypsyism and stressed the need for more ambitious targets and concrete goals, with measurable indicators and robust monitoring.

Replies to a SLIDO question supported the evaluation findings that a new post-2020 EU initiative should address antigypsyism, discrimination and socio-economic inclusion simultaneously with 90 % of the participants sharing this view. A few NRCPs mentioned their support for a combined option as proposed by civil society, stressing the need to include in this option the ambition of the recent Western Balkans Roma integration declaration². One NRCP recalled that what is needed is an anti-poverty and inclusion approach without a specific Roma focus as set out in option 4 combined with option 3.

In terms of policy instruments, there was a common understanding that a revised EU Framework (option 5) and new Council recommendation (option 6) should include a stronger focus on fighting antigypsyism, strengthening the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS), empowering civil society and Roma participation. In respect of content, stakeholders strongly supported a broadened approach to equality and inclusion, where fighting antigypsyism is an additional self-standing thematic area and a cross-cutting priority, combatting poverty and increasing child protection are promoted, EU mobile Roma are included in the NRIS. In terms of terminology, “integration” should be replaced by “inclusion” and emphasis put on the “rights deprivation” of Roma people in contrast to labelling Roma as “vulnerable”.

Mr Fresno’s presentation also reflected on the diversity of country situations and the approach to adopt for the post-2020 EU Roma initiative in this regard. The proposed logic is to define shared objectives that address the common challenge, in addition to grouping EU Member States in clusters, according to their respective situation and challenges as regards Roma equality and inclusion. The discussion on this topic received less attention, with no disagreement expressed. Participants underlined the importance of the new EU initiative and new national strategies to work as strategic planning instruments, setting out also how mainstream policies are to become more inclusive of Roma and how EU and national funding for targeted and mainstream measures should be mobilised.

² The declaration commits the Western Balkan countries to concrete progress in education, employment, health, housing, civil registration and non-discrimination by accession.

The policy drivers as presented by the expert were generally accepted with some participants announcing written comments for potential reformulation. Additional problem drivers mentioned included the ignorance of history of Roma persecution and the relationship between past persecution and current exclusion, implementation deficiencies, and accountability of governments.

Session 2: Measuring progress in Roma equality and inclusion post-2020

Ms Gesa Böckermann (DG Justice and Consumers) introduced the session by underlining that the evaluation of the EU Framework highlighted the importance of objectives and targets in terms of measuring effectiveness and relevance of the EU Framework. The findings in particular stressed the importance of enabling Member States to follow a more tailored approach taking into account specific national contexts. She recalled that the Communication on the mid-term evaluation, adopted by the Commission in December 2018, proposes the use of a portfolio of Roma integration objectives with accompanying targets and indicators, adaptable to country-specific situations. It recommends that Member States select country-specific targets from a list of optional targets and indicators, thus differentiated targets in a common EU Framework. Ms Böckermann thanked the Fundamental Rights Agency for its work towards a first proposal for a post-2020 indicator framework, which after further development could potentially become an integral part of a new policy initiative for Roma equality and inclusion.

Mr Andrey Ivanov (FRA) presented the conceptual framework presented in the background paper prepared for the second session, the key definitions (data, indicator, target) and the seven dimensions for outcome indicators: Education (1), Employment (2), Health (3) and Housing (4) Poverty (5), Discrimination and Hate crime (6), Rights awareness and trust in public institutions (7). He recalled that both process and outcome need indicators in order to be measured, which requires a balanced approach between qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Outcome indicators require regular data collection, to be used for setting a baseline and measuring progress towards targets.

Ms Ursula Till-Tentschert (FRA) focused her intervention on the headline indicators in the seven dimensions. She explained the methodology for establishing the proposed draft indicators, which consists in screening available data, analyzing whether it is statistically robust, and selecting data where benchmarks are available for the general population. As a result, the most suitable draft headline indicators and secondary indicators were identified, giving the broader picture. In addition, these are to be complemented by national indicators for monitoring action plans (tertiary indicators) and capturing the particular situation in the countries.

Participants were invited to reflect on how to reduce the headline indicators (to one or two per area) and identify missing headline indicators that could be collected in future surveys.

Several comments were formulated in support of the newly proposed indicators such as precarious housing (homelessness), mapping of evictions, life expectancy. The following suggestions for additional indicators were formulated: residential segregation, affordability of housing, child rights related indicators, but not child marriage, child and maternal mortality rates, participation, learning achievements, type of jobs, the need for a cross-cutting indicator on environmental justice.

Additional points discussed included the need to further develop analysis on safeguards for mainstream measures to ensure effective access for Roma, the link between areas (e.g. health and education, all other areas as determinants of the health situation), the self-identification and protection of individual data, the need for a more participative approach in the design of such an indicator framework and the duty of Member States to collect disaggregated data where there is a strong indication that discrimination occurs. NRCPs also called for the possibility to expand FRA surveys to more EU MS.

FRA concluded the session by recalling that this is the beginning of the consultation on this topic and that contributions to the background paper in written form are welcome by end October. One should also keep in mind that headline and secondary indicators should remain operational (limited number) and comparable across countries. It was also highlighted that the role of FRA surveys is to fill-in the gap in data collection, but it is not the only possible response, in particular in the long-term. Several countries are already collecting national or local data on Roma inclusion, others have recently decided to do so (e.g. FRA can offer support in data collection, for example to the national statistical offices in BG and SK).

Session 3: Focus on fighting antigypsyism and promoting Roma participation

The session focused on the question of how a potential post 2020 initiative could contribute more effectively to combatting antigypsyism and promoting Roma participation. A short discussion note had been prepared by an expert consortium in advance of the workshop, serving as a basis for discussion and as starting point for the elaboration of comprehensive reports to be prepared by the expert consortium for the Commission. These comprehensive reports on the themes of antigypsyism, participation and diversity will be prepared until the end of the year, taking into account various civil society positions shared prior to and at the workshop, as well as written contributions received until the end of October.

The session was introduced by Ms Mirjam-Angela Karoly, Romano Centro, who pointed to the definition of antigypsyism as a specific form of racism, ways of countering antigypsyism and the results of the midterm evaluation of the EU Framework for NRIS, which indicated that a clearer focus on fighting antigypsyism and discrimination should complement, not replace the socio-economic inclusion approach. She also referred to Roma participation as a powerful objective and tool of policy formation in the EUFW and its implementation mechanisms, but which was not yet fully realized.

The discussions highlighted that there is a need for a common definition of antigypsyism, including all its dimensions and manifestations, which should be uniformly endorsed by all the Member States and the enlargement countries. Some participants expressed the concern that a reinforced consensus on the terminology may lead to further marginalization of the Roma population and eventually diminish the impact of the applicable discrimination legislation. In view of a possible post 2020 Roma initiative, it was suggested that antigypsyism should be tackled horizontally alongside the four main areas, but also as a standalone priority area. Some participants suggested that the feasibility of a 'combating antigypsyism directive' should be explored. Various remarks were made in favor of establishing Truth and Reconciliation Commissions whilst reinforcing the application of the legal instruments and creating better partnerships among the various actors working on Roma inclusion. The discussions highlighted that a bigger emphasis should be placed on the relatively marginally addressed areas of the current Framework, such as fighting poverty, material deprivation, evictions, discrimination, and increasing focus on child protection, the gender dimension, diversity within Roma groups, environmental justice, intra EU mobility and lack of identity cards, as well as arts and culture and protecting Roma cultural heritage.

Some of the National Roma Contact Points pointed out that antigypsyism is clearly an area that has to be prioritized in the NRIS, also with a view to the Roma Holocaust component, Porajmos and building on the experiences and the successful inclusion models of the enlargement countries. Discussions also reflected on the need to support a stronger debate at the national and local levels, to focus on eradicating segregation, to make better use of law enforcement to penalize antigypsyism, and .

In terms of participation, participants underlined the importance of involving Roma and pro-Roma civil society through meaningful consultation processes and engagement in the post 2020 initiative. Additionally, it was recommended that consultation with international Roma networks should be better consolidated and that a specific budget should be allocated to enable the participation of

these networks' representatives. The discussions pointed equally to the importance of ensuring institutional accountability (e.g. by ensuring access of Roma to reports from NRCPs), as well as increased participation of Roma themselves in public institutions and National Roma Platforms.

Session 4: Focus on the diversity within the Roma population

The session focused on the questions of how a potential post 2020 initiative could better reflect and deal with the diversity within the Roma population, in particular with the needs of women, youth, children, as well as EU mobile citizens and migrants. A short discussion note had been prepared by an expert consortium in advance of the workshop, serving as a basis for discussion and as starting point for the elaboration of comprehensive reports to be prepared by the expert consortium for the Commission. These comprehensive reports on the themes of antigypsyism, participation and diversity will be prepared until the end of the year, taking into account various civil society positions shared prior to and at the workshop, as well as written contributions received until the end of October.

The session was introduced by Deyan Kolev, Center Amalipe, who referred to the term "Roma" as an umbrella term and the fact that a 'one-size-fits-all' approach is ineffective. He pointed to the Roma unity that is present behind the diversity of the Roma population and that in view of a post-2020 EU initiative for Roma inclusion, a real benefit can be generated from reaching out and engaging all social strata through a mix of measures and approaches, including – better educated and relatively well integrated Roma. He underlined that a post-2020 EU initiative could bring strong added value through setting specific EU goals regarding Roma women, youth and children, increasing the awareness of the gender dimension and child rights in all the other fields, encouraging Member States to make full use of available funding opportunities for Roma women, youth and children; and linking it with the implementation of obligations derived from the European acquis such as the Gender Equality Directive and UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Civil society participants underlined the importance of not overlooking the situation of elderly people, LGBTIQ people and people with disability, or migrants from Syria. It was suggested however that targeting specific sub-groups should not reinforce or create power structures that would push the vulnerable even further to the margins of the society. When referring to children and youth, participants highlighted the frequent placing of Roma pupils in special institutions, which should not be financed with EU funding and equal access to quality inclusive mainstream education should be prioritized. The importance of including the Roma dimension in mainstream policies was underlined, such as for example the future Child Guarantee. It was expressed that the debate on early marriages, very often associated with Roma girls, should be dropped, as it reinforces stereotypes. It was equally highlighted that the issue of Roma women should be clearly mainstreamed and not regarded as an additional component. Measures to target Roma women should build on the existing work of the civil society, specifically the work carried out by the Roma women movement. In addition, there should be a better reflection of the needs of Roma women within the relevant mainstream tools, such as for instance, the Istanbul Convention. With regard to mobile EU citizens, the difficulties around registration and recognition as a worker were highlighted. Regarding Roma youth, it was indicated that they should be specifically targeted by action plans meticulously aligned with the work of other institutions.

Several NRCPs expressed their support for tackling the diversity among the Roma population, especially with a view to EU mobile citizens. One NRCP emphasized that there is a need for further clarifications regarding the understanding of EU mobile citizen and whether an ethnic affiliation to the terminology brings any added value to the debate or policy intervention. The term "Roma EU citizens enjoying their free movement rights" to replace the expression "EU mobile Roma" was proposed. Other NRCPs pointed to the risk of confusion between EU mobile citizen "Roma nomadic"

and “Roma traveller”, and the importance of double mainstreaming of the Roma youth aspects and prioritizing a child rights based approach.

To the SLIDO question of whether incorporating the needs of EU-mobile Roma in national strategies as a precondition for advancing Roma equality and inclusion, 74% of the participants answered yes, and 26% answered no.

Conclusions and follow-up

Mr Szabolcs Schmidt, Head of Unit, Non-discrimination and Roma co-ordination, thanked participants for the constructive discussions and valuable contributions during the workshop. He explained that DG Justice and Consumers has now started preparations for a new post-2020 initiative on Roma equality and inclusion. Preparations will include an impact assessment of possible policy options and the drafting of the policy initiative. The current timeline for adoption of such a policy initiative, including guidance for post-2020 national Roma strategies, is the second half of 2020. Should countries plan to renew, revise or update their current strategies before - for example in order to adapt it to the requirements of the ESIF enabling conditions - useful guidance for future national strategies can in the meantime be found in the 2018 Communication on the evaluation of the EU Framework for NRIS³ and the 2019 Communication reporting on the implementation of the NRIS⁴.

He underlined that this workshop was one element of the targeted consultation of stakeholders to be conducted for the new initiative. He stressed that there will be more opportunities for discussion, including at the next NRCP meeting, the next regular meeting with civil society, bilateral ad-hoc meetings with organisations preparing contributions, the EU Roma Week and more. As immediate next step, DG Justice would be grateful to receive additional written comments on the background papers until the end of October 2019, to be sent to the functional mailbox JUST-ROMA-POST-2020@ec.europa.eu.

Mr Schmidt explained that the discussions at the workshop, the forthcoming contributions as well as position papers already received from civil society prior to the workshop will contribute to the impact assessment and the development of a post-2020 initiative on Roma equality and inclusion in various ways:

- The Impact Assessment will include an assessment of possible policy options and will reflect views expressed by stakeholders (with due consideration to a potential combined option) – prior, during and after the workshop.
- FRA will further develop the indicators framework presented based on comments received. An indicators framework could potentially become an integral part of a new policy initiative for Roma equality and inclusion.
- Comments on the discussion notes on antigypsyism, participation and diversity will feed into the finalisation of dedicated reports on these three themes. The reports are being prepared for the Commission by the expert consortium present during the workshop. These are thematic reports focusing on how to address these three issues in a post-2020 initiative. The reports will provide advice to the Commission, but will obviously not replace the drafting of the post-2020 initiative, which is the responsibility of the Commission after due consideration of received contributions.

Mr Schmidt thanked the moderator for his excellent contribution to the success of the day and wished all the participants a safe journey home.

³ COM(2018) 785

⁴ COM(2019) 406