

ERPC Minimum Principles for the European Commission to make guidelines on the Roma National Strategies

July 2011

The European Commission (EC) is about to formulate guidelines for Member States on the development of their national strategies or sets of policy measures (hereafter “National Strategies”). In November 2010, the ERPC has submitted detailed comments to the Commission on the **Essential Elements** that should be part of the EU Framework on National Roma Integration Strategies (hereafter “the Framework”).¹ Most of these essential elements outlined by the ERPC are equally applicable to the National Strategies. Considering those, and based on the commitment of Heads of State on 24 June 2011 and the **EPSCO Council Conclusions of 19 May 2011**, particularly regarding **fundamental rights, non-discrimination, gender equality and empowerment and participation of Roma**, the ERPC expects that the following outlined principles will be, as a *minimum*, reflected in the guidelines.

¹ See <http://www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/erpc-essential-elements-euframework-02112010.pdf>

When developing and updating National Strategies, Member States should ensure

1. an open and transparent process ;
2. active participation of civil society and specifically of Roma, EU funds managing authorities, and local authorities (see annex II), including by actively raising awareness of the process, seeking broad consensus of these stakeholders;

National Roma Integration Strategies should

Content

3. Utilise the 10 Common Basic Principles on Roma Inclusion as a base-line;
4. Define ambitious, targeted and realistic goals within a defined timeline (see Annex I);
5. Build on lessons learnt from the previous strategies;
6. Follow a human-rights approach, including in particular gender equality, non-discrimination, desegregation, combating anti-Gypsyism and promotion of a proactive approach to Roma inclusion (see Annex I);
7. Incorporate policy measures beyond the areas outlined in the Framework as relevant for Roma integration in the national context (for example, address the lack of identity documents, migration, etc);

Governance

8. Ensure sufficient budget and specific allocation of funding;
9. Ensure access to EU funding;
10. Establish coordination mechanism between horizontal and vertical actors at national level—with clear lines of responsibilities and accountability, in particular regarding the role and a clear mandate of a national point of contact for Roma integration;
11. Ensure the alignment of the National Strategies with the EU 2020 National Reform Programmes and other relevant EU policies;
12. Ensure active and widespread participation of Roma people and other civil society in the implementation, monitoring and review of the national strategies (see Annex II);

13. Systematically raise awareness of the Framework's process and of Roma's rights, to make sure that the whole population and in particular the most marginalised people are aware of the National Strategies and of the opportunities they offer ;
14. Put in place monitoring and reporting mechanisms based as much as possible on data disaggregated by ethnicity and gender; include, if necessary, a strategy to enhance disaggregated data collection;
15. Address the implementation of the national strategies at the local level, and, when possible, require local action plans to be designed, inviting regional and local authorities, Roma people, civil society and social service providers to input into the process;
16. Ensure the outreach of the European Roma Platform, for instance by an annual national Roma Platform meetings (see Annex I).

Annexes

Annex I. Details on some of the Principles

Ad Point 5.

Definition of ambitious, targeted and realistic goals within a defined timeline.

- The National Strategies should include **short, middle** and **long-term** targets. For example, States should immediately address imminent forced evictions and residential/educational segregation and other human rights threats.
- The targets should be as **concrete** as possible, and when relevant, they should be **measurable**.
- To be operational, targets should be summarised in **indicator language, using both quantitative and qualitative indicators**. Finally, they should be backed up with **solid data**.²
- Guidance on the definition and content goals should follow relevant **regional and international guidelines** (see para. 38 of the EPSCO Council Conclusions).
In particular, guidance should be sought from the Recommendations adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the **Council of Europe on Roma and Travellers**, as for instance in the following areas:
 - General Policies: Rec(2008)5
 - Health: Rec(2006)10
 - Housing: Rec(2005)4
 - Employment: Rec(2001)17
 - Education: No R (2000)4 and CM/Rec(2009)4
- The goals and targets set should fit within a given and precise **timeline**.

² For further advice on setting specific targets for the inclusion of vulnerable groups, see ENAR publication, Target-setting for improving the socio-economic situation of migrants and ethnic minorities in Europe, November 2010, http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/publications/pubTargetSetting_final%20lowres.pdf.

Ad Point 7.

A Human rights perspective, including in particular a perspective on gender, non-discrimination, anti-gypsyism and de-segregation

- As stressed in the EPSCO Council Conclusions (paras 13, 16, 39), the strategy should be respectful of and aim at improving human rights. A human rights perspective involves notably:
 - i. Application of human rights principles and legal standards;
 - ii. Accountability/access to justice;
 - iii. **Empowerment** of rights holders;
 - iv. Participation (by those concerned in decisions that affect them);
 - v. Prioritisation of vulnerable groups.
- The improvement of human rights should be both **mainstreamed, and an end in itself.**
- In particular, the goals and targets should pay specific attention to the following aspects:
 - **Gender dimension**

States' strategies should duly reflect the multiple discrimination experience by Roma and often based on gender by mainstreaming gender issues and focusing, when relevant, on the specific situations of women.

- **Non-discrimination**

The EPSCO Council Conclusions have recognised that combating discrimination is essential for improving the situation of Roma (see para. 13). Member States have the primary responsibility to fight discrimination, and this fight must consequently be a **central element** of the National Strategies.

National strategies should **directly** aim at combating discrimination, through legal and other means. Social integration cannot be achieved without simultaneously combating discrimination, and addressing the systemic links between discrimination and exclusion.

- **Combating anti-Gypsyism and promote a pro-active approach to Roma inclusion**

The EPSCO Council Conclusions also recognised that the National Strategies should “foster positive changes in attitudes towards Roma” (para. 40). It is necessary that actions aimed at promoting a positive attitude change towards Roma include the use of a positive rhetoric at all levels, and a zero tolerance policy towards stigmatising comments by public authorities at any level.

- **Empowerment**

The National Strategies should promote empowerment by applying community development approaches and promoting active citizenship. By the same account, strategies should set out how they foster civil society capacity to mobilise communities, so as to enhance the value of active participation of Roma in policy design, implementation and evaluation (para. 41).

- **Desegregation**

Desegregation is a severe result of systematic discrimination that entrenches exclusion. National Strategies should prioritise measures that aim to overcome desegregation.

Ad Point 17.

Outreach activities .

Through outreach activities, the Member States should promote the work of the European Roma Platform towards national and local stakeholders and simultaneously invite national and local input to the activities of the Platform.

Such process should involve different local and national stakeholders on social inclusion, development and non-discrimination and gender equality. It would allow for and trigger a constant dialogue between stakeholders on the implementation of the strategies. In particular it would

- Allow annual reviews and reporting by local, regional and national authorities and civil society;
- Ensure a greater awareness on the existence and promotion of the national Roma strategy ;
- Trigger the development of local and regional action plans for the implementation of the national strategies;
- Allow for broader consultation with civil society and Roma;
- Improve partnership between Roma communities, civil society and local and regional authorities;
- Allow for identifying and promoting good practices at local and national level.

Annex II. Role of Roma NGOs and other Roma actors in the development, implementation and monitoring of the National Roma Integration Strategies

Roma people organisations should be involved in all stages of the development, implementation, monitoring and review of the National Roma Integration Strategies. In particular they should participate in

1. Policy dialogue and in consultation processes at local, national and regional levels;
2. Assessing needs and formulating strategies and targets;
3. The implementation of community programmes and projects;
4. Monitoring the implementation of the strategies at local, regional and national level, by
 - a. Participating in the monitoring committees of operational programs (ex. Romania Human Resource OP);
 - b. Submitting shadow reports to the member states reports on the strategy implementation;
 - c. Identifying and promote best practices at local, national and EU level.

The ERPC is an informal gathering of non-governmental organisations operating at EU level on issues of human rights, anti-discrimination, anti-racism, social inclusion, and Roma and Travellers' rights. Its members are Amnesty International, the European Roma Rights Centre, the European Roma Information Office, the Open Society Institute, European Network Against Racism, Minority Rights Group International, the European Roma Grassroots Organizations Network, Policy Center for Roma and Minorities, the Roma Education Fund, and Fundación Secretariado Gitano.

From May 2011 to November 2011, the rotating chairmanship of the ERPC is held by Amnesty International in close cooperation with Fundación Secretariado Gitano and the European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network. Contact: coordination@romapolicy.eu