



PRESS RELEASE

“A minority that is highly prone to exclusion, racism and xenophobia”

Brussels, BELGIUM
8 April 2015

In the light of the International Roma Day, Eurodiaconia would like to express its concern over the deplorable situation many Roma continue to face across Europe.

Eurodiaconia is a network of diaconal organisations fighting against poverty and social exclusion. Its member organisations are actively engaged in the support of Roma communities all over Europe. Through material aid, education, language courses, vocational training, health services and advocacy work towards local and national public authorities, our members seek to foster Roma people's social inclusion. Our members report that Roma people are highly prone to exclusion, racism and xenophobia, particularly today in the context of the crisis.

Despite positive developments such as the adoption of an EU framework for National Roma Integration Strategies, Roma communities remain amongst the most vulnerable and marginalised communities in Europe. Roma keep being expelled from Western or Northern host countries to their countries of origin, regardless of their European rights as the great majority of them are European citizens. At the same time, the causes of their emigration from those countries are not properly addressed. Heather Roy, Secretary General of Eurodiaconia, insists that *“Roma people are literally caught between two fires: expulsions on the one side, and lack of socioeconomic perspective on the other side. This is not human!”* As a consequence, Eurodiaconia urges all EU Member States to enable Roma communities to access social protection and social services, health care, education, housing and employment (see our [policy position paper](#)).

Beyond social protection and assistance, Eurodiaconia would also like to stress the need to involve Roma communities more strongly in decision-making processes. It cannot be a top-down process requesting them to do what was decided “on their behalf”. To foster their participation, Eurodiaconia has just released a document containing [guidelines to promote Roma participation](#), based on extensive discussion amongst members from all across Europe. Heather Roy concludes that *“empowerment should translate into co-ownership, with Roma acting as advocates and mediators at various political levels. They should not be treated as passive receivers of services which affect them without involving them.”*

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