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Second EU Roma Summit – ERPC Joint Statement

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The concurrence of continuing and even intensifying discrimination against and systemic socio-economic exclusion of Roma across Europe on the one hand and the questionable impact of European initiatives to address these on the other, calls for firmer European level action to promote Roma inclusion

The European Union's approach to Roma Inclusion since the first Roma Summit in September 2008 has been characterized by relative complacency about the limited results achieved. The European Roma Policy Coalition (ERPC) is concerned that the failure to demonstrate real progress will delegitimize EU contributions to Roma Inclusion.

The European Parliament's resolution of 25 March 2010, adopted ahead of the Second Roma Summit, unequivocally calls for a 'comprehensive approach at European level' and expresses deep concern that the 'European Commission has thus far not responded to the European Parliament's request of 31 January 2008 to prepare a European Strategy on the Roma'.

1. The ERPC regrets that the aims and objectives of the Summit have not been clarified and reiterates its expectations for the Summit, issued on 9 February 2010, in particular its urgent recommendation to the Spanish Presidency that the Summit needs to avoid a declarative character and must focus on concrete policy commitments.

2. The ERPC believes that it is necessary to include key Romani policy makers, Romani elected officials and representatives from international Roma organisations on the agenda in view of the aim to take forward concrete steps. The ERPC is also deeply disappointed that the Spanish Head of State, Jos□ Luis Rodr□guez Zapatero, and European Commission President, Jos□ Manuel Barroso, will not participate in the Summit. Their absence is the wrong signal as to the European Union's commitment to Roma issues and will negatively affect the level of representation of other EU Member States.

3. The ERPC urges the Spanish Presidency and the European Commission to take the Second Roma Summit as an opportunity to announce concrete and progressive policy proposals, including a commitment to developing a comprehensive and coherent approach to Roma Inclusion. Crucially, a formal mechanism of coordination, both internally and with the Member States, needs to be established.

4. Given the weak progress to date, the ERPC calls on the European Council to adopt at its June 2010 Summit concrete and specific conclusions on Roma Inclusion, inviting the European Commission to present before June 2011 a proposed EU Framework Strategy on Roma Inclusion, in order that the next community financial perspectives can appropriately reflect that policy.

5. The ERPC also calls on the Council of the European Union to adopt concrete conclusions on Roma inclusion at the EPSCO meeting in June 2010. The draft Conclusions currently under discussion are missing any reference to a Framework Strategy, whilst inviting the European Commission to create the necessary basis for existing instruments to function adequately and effectively: this basis can only be a comprehensive and coherent strategy and the Council Conclusions should explicitly call for it.

5. The Framework Strategy on Roma Inclusion needs to address the existing and growing racism against Roma as well as crucial areas of social inclusion, active citizenship and reintegration meant to improve the lives of Roma and their participation in European society. The Commission's proposal should include effective and dedicated institutional mechanisms employing Roma experts able to develop, monitor, assess and help the implementation by the Member States of such a policy.

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