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Published at: 23-09-2010

Source: [Portal Europe](#)

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The European Parliament held a debate today on the conclusions of the European Council meeting of 16 September. Livia J6ryka MEP welcomed the Hungarian Government's statement on launching a European Roma Strategy during the Hungarian Presidency and called for an action plan based on economic attributes instead of ethnicity.

In her speech during the debate, Livia J6ryka MEP welcomed the announcement of Hungarian PM Viktor Orb6n on launching a European Roma Strategy during the upcoming Hungarian Presidency in the first half of 2011. J6ryka recalled that the EPP Group had always been the propelling force behind developing a common EU programme for Roma inclusion and expressed her hope that after the announcement of the representatives of several Member States, the Council would also support the next EU Presidency in providing a common European solution for a common European problem.

"The primary cause behind the social exclusion of most European Roma is not racism or discrimination, but the interdependence of several historical and economic factors", she explained. "The strategy must therefore define its target audience not by ethnicity, but on the basis of its common economic attributes and must focus on alleviating geographically concentrated deep poverty, treating Roma and non-Roma alike in certain disadvantaged micro-regions", she said.

According to J6ryka, this strategy must permit an EU-coordinated chain of complex development programmes based on clear and unambiguous indicators - such as the Laeken indicators - with proper community monitoring and taking advantage of the multilevel governance mechanism. She emphasised that the pan-European action plan must prevent the reproduction of deep poverty through generations. In the medium term it is necessary to equalise the regional lag of the underdeveloped micro-regions and in the long run, the hopeless, poverty-stricken masses of today must become the equal taxpayers of tomorrow. J6ryka closed her speech by saying that this would require a sustained, enhanced and shared effort by all the stakeholders, the EU institutions, Member States's authorities, NGOs, and also the Roma people. "Europe cannot afford politics as usual - not at a time when the demographic and social challenges we face are so great and the consequences of inaction are so dangerous", she said.