

Roma: combating racism and eliminating discrimination alone is not enough for social inclusion

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Lhvia J6ryka MEP presented the working document of her Report on the EU strategy on the social inclusion of the Roma today to the European Parliament. The document points out that the social exclusion of European Roma is not exclusively defined by discrimination, but also by the interaction of several historic and economic factors and that a strategy aiming to remedy this exclusion must define its target audience by economic attributes instead of ethnicity.

The Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee of the European Parliament appointed Lhvia J6ryka as Rapporteur of the EU strategy on Roma inclusion last October. In the working document, J6ryka argues that while combating racism and eliminating discrimination is essential in building an inclusive society, anti-discrimination measures alone are insufficient to facilitate the social inclusion of Roma, since their socio-economic exclusion is not exclusively defined by racism or discrimination but also by the interaction of several historic-economic factors. The document states that an EU-level approach aimed at the alleviation of sub-standard living conditions must therefore focus on eliminating not poverty per se, but a special form of poverty, i.e. the poverty of geographically-concentrated post-transitional rural or suburban underclass, to which the majority of the EU's Roma population is directly subject to or indirectly threatened by.

The working document also draws attention to the strong territorial dimension of poverty and marginalisation. The geographic distribution of social disadvantages is not uniform throughout the Member States, but poverty and social exclusion is concentrated in underdeveloped micro-regions which in many of the new Member States are predominantly inhabited by Roma. J6ryka therefore recommends the establishment of an all-European crisis map which measures and surveys those micro-regions within the EU where communities are hardest hit by poverty and social exclusion.

In connection with the J6ryka Report, the European Parliament's Policy Department published a tender for an extensive study analysing the integration programmes of Member States, the EU dimension of Roma inclusion and the possible related legal instruments within Community law. The winner of the tender, the London School of Economics, is expected to present its interim findings at the end of October. In the working document, J6ryka assured that she would build upon the results of the study in her final Report, which will present specific recommendations in the draft Report concerning the framework and structure of such a cooperation as well as the role of EU institutions, Member State governments, local authorities and stakeholder bodies such as the Roma Platform or the

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newly-established Task Force of the European Commission on Roma inclusion.

The Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee in the European Parliament will hold a debate on the document in October.