

## Roma: Time for a real European level response

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The Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Committee of the European Parliament held an extraordinary meeting on Wednesday on the situation of Roma people in Europe with the participation of Commissioners Reding, Malmstr6m and Andor. Regarding the Commission's decision to launch infringement procedures against several countries in case of non-compliance with the EU's Directive on free movement, Livia J6ryka MEP welcomed the settlement of the issue and urged the stakeholders to focus on developing a Community response to remedy the terrible poverty from which the Roma are trying to escape when they migrate.

The meeting saw the participation of European Commission Vice-President and Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, Viviane Reding, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, L6szly Andor, and Commissioner for Home Affairs, Cecilia Malmstr6m, to discuss the situation of European Roma in light of the recent expulsions of Romanian and Bulgarian Roma from France. Livia J6ryka MEP welcomed the decision and the expected settlement of the case, because - as she said - due to the uncertain and ambiguous period of time so far, the Roma case has mostly fallen victim to institutional and political selfish clashes. J6ryka said that this diverts the attention from offering viable European level responses to remedy the terrible poverty from which the Roma are trying to escape when they migrate. She recalled that regardless of political affiliations, the European Parliament stood united in calling for a European level strategy for Roma inclusion and had been pushing for this for the last six years. J6ryka also expressed her content that not only those countries with a significant Roma population, but also the big Member States acknowledged facing a common European problem demanding a common European answer.

J6ryka recalled that she had presented the working document of her report on the EU strategy on Roma inclusion the previous day, outlining the principles that the strategy must take into account. "It doesn't matter what it is called, or in what framework and structure it is formed: anything that fulfils these requirements - i.e. transcending soft law, focusing on socio-economic attributes instead of ethnicity, complementing anti-discrimination legislation and taking into account the territoriality of exclusion - is rightfully considered to be a true European Roma Strategy", she said.

During interviews after the hearing, J6ryka said that on the same day, the EPP Group's Working Group on Roma inclusion had held its first meeting under her leadership. The Group aims to provide a package of policy recommendations for the EU institutions and Member State governments regarding the contents of the EU Strategy on Roma inclusion, the working document which J6ryka recently submitted.