

32nd SESSION

CG32(2017)17final
29 March 2017

Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society (Revised)

Current Affairs Committee

Congress Spokesperson on Roma issues:¹ John WARMISHAM, United Kingdom (L, SOC)

Resolution 415 (2017)	2
Text of the Revised Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society	3

1 L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions
EPP/CCE: European People's Party Group in the Congress
SOC: Socialist Group
ILDG: Independent and Liberal Democrat Group
ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists Group
NR: Members not belonging to a political group of the Congress

RESOLUTION 415 (2017)²

1. The Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society is a document drawn up under the auspices of the European Union Consultative Commission on Racism and Xenophobia opened for signature on 28 February in Utrecht 1998. Taking inspiration from the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination opened for signature in 1965, it rejects all forms of racist violence, incitement to racial hatred and harassment and any form of racial discrimination.

2. Endorsed by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) in September 2003 and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in March 2004, this Charter, which was originally applicable in the European Union has, since then, become one of the reference texts that different Council of Europe bodies have relied on when discussing Roma issues.

3. In October 2016, the Congress adopted Resolution 403 and Recommendation 388 on ‘The situation of Roma and Travellers in the context of rising extremism, xenophobia and the refugee crisis in Europe’, whereby the Congress encouraged local and regional authorities to fight anti-Gypsyism, be it social or institutional, by publicly denouncing hate speech, violence and discrimination against Roma and Travellers.

4. In January 2017, the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe for Roma Issues, Valeriu Nicolae, addressed a revised version of the Charter to the Congress, for adoption, together with a declaration to be signed by mayors individually committing themselves to its implementation. This request was triggered by his concerns regarding the need to bring the Charter up to date, on the one hand because some Eastern European countries had not been targeted for signature as they became members after 2003 and, on the other hand, because political developments related to increased migration and concepts such as anti-Gypsyism as well as other manifestations of racism were not reflected therein.

5. The Congress and the SRSG for Roma Issues have been involved in joint projects previously, particularly in the context of the “European Alliance of Cities and Regions for the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers”, which was set up in 2014 to promote action for Roma and Travellers³ at the local level. The Congress Spokesperson on Roma Issues is persuaded that an updated version of the Charter can assist local authorities in their fight against anti-Gypsyism and that the signature of a declaration of commitment would give a much needed new impetus to their action.

6. In the light of the above, the Congress invites the local authorities of Council of Europe member States to:

- a. endorse the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society in its revised version ;
- b. circulate the Charter as widely as possible and promote it as a text of principles that can guide the action of local authorities in their campaigns and activities;
- c. tasks its Current Affairs Committee to follow up with appropriate action supporting the Charter’s promotion.

² Debated and adopted by the Congress on 29 March 2017, 2nd sitting (see Document [CG32\(2017\)17](#), explanatory memorandum), Congress Spokesperson on Roma issues: John WARMISHAM, United Kingdom (L, SOC).

³The term “Roma and Travellers” is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term “Gens du voyage”, as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.



REVISED CHARTER OF EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTIES FOR A NON-RACIST SOCIETY

[proposal submitted by the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe
for Roma Issues⁴]

WE, THE DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL PARTIES OF EUROPE,

Having regard to the international human rights instruments signed and ratified by our member States, in particular to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,

Having regard to article 1 of this Convention, which defines racial discrimination as "... any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural of any other field of public life ...",

Having regard to the preamble to the Single European Act in which the Member States of the European Community declare to work together to promote democracy on the basis of the fundamental rights recognised in the constitutions and laws of the member States at all political levels, in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Social Charter,

Having regard to the Treaty of Amsterdam which enables the European Community to "... take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on ... racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief..." and facilitates police and judicial cooperation in the framework of the member States in preventing and combating racism and xenophobia,

Recognising that the fundamental rights as enshrined in the international human rights instruments signed and ratified by the member States include the right to free and uninhibited political speech and debate,

Mindful that according to these same international human rights instruments one's political freedoms are not absolute in view of the equally fundamental right to be protected against racial discrimination and that therefore political freedoms cannot be allowed to be abused to exploit, cause or initiate prejudice on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin or nationality or for the purpose of seeking to gain the sympathy of the electorate for prejudice on such grounds,

⁴ Mr Valeriu Nicolae, Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe (SRSG) for Roma Issues, submitted this revised version of the 1998 Charter of "European Political Parties for a non-racist society" to the Congress for endorsement, in order to respond to new forms of discrimination, hatred and violence against minorities and to renew and reinforce the commitment of political parties to tackle this issue.

Recalling that Europe derives from its history a duty of remembrance, vigilance and combat against the rise of racism, racial discrimination, gender-based discrimination, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, antisemitism, islamophobia, anti-Gypsyism and intolerance, as well as of crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes and the public denial, trivialisation, justification or condoning of such crimes;

Worried about the resurgence of rhetoric presenting migrants and refugees as a threat to and a burden on society, which increases negative reactions among the public to immigration and immigrants,

Being aware of the special tasks and responsibilities of political parties as actors in a democratic political process, defending, articulating and bearing witness to the basic principles of a democratic society; providing a platform for discussion on issues where there may be differences of opinion, integrating different views into the process of political decision making, thereby enabling society to solve conflicts of interest and of opinion between various social groups through dialogue rather than through opting out and conflict; selecting representatives at various levels for active participation in the political process,

Convinced that free use of one's political rights can and must go hand in hand with firmly upholding the principle of non-discrimination and is inherent in the democratic process itself,

Being convinced furthermore that representation of ethnic minority groups in the political process is properly an integral part of the democratic process, since political parties are or should strive to be a reflection of society,

COMMIT OURSELVES TO ADHERE TO THE FOLLOWING SPECIFIC PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE:

- **To defend** basic human rights and democratic principles and to reject all forms of racist violence, incitement to racial hatred and harassment and any form of racial discrimination.
- **To refuse** to display, to publish or to have published, to distribute or to endorse in any way views and positions which stir up or invite, or may reasonably be expected to stir up or to invite prejudices, hostility or division between people of different ethnic or national origins or religious beliefs, and to deal firmly with any racist sentiments and behaviour within its own ranks.
- **To deal responsibly and fairly** with sensitive topics relating to such groups and to avoid their stigmatisation.
- **To refrain from** any form of political alliance or cooperation at all levels with any political party which incites or attempts to stir up racial or ethnic prejudices and racial hatred.
- **To strive for** the fair representation of the above mentioned groups at all levels of the political parties with a special responsibility for the party leadership to stimulate and support the recruitment of candidates from these groups for political functions as well as membership.

And further pledge to take appropriate action to ensure that all persons who work for or associate themselves in any way with any of our election campaigns or other activities will be aware of and at all times act in accordance with the above principles.