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Strasbourg, 2 March 2021

11th Meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue

With Roma And Traveller civil society

“Combating Antigypsyism”

Strasbourg, online, 29-30 April 2021

Concept Note

BACKGROUND

Despite some progress made, Roma and Travellers¹ in Europe continue to suffer from prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination and exclusion often based on long-standing and deeply rooted antigypsyism.

The Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) defines antigypsyism as a “*specific form of racism, an ideology founded on racial superiority, a form of dehumanisation and institutional racism nurtured by historical discrimination, which is expressed, among others, by violence, hate speech, exploitation, stigmatisation and the most blatant kind of discrimination*”.² This is borne out of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and Council of Europe monitoring bodies such as ECRI, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Committee of Social Rights.

In 2012, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe expressed its deep concern about the rise of anti-Gypsyism, anti-Roma rhetoric and violent attacks against Roma which are incompatible with standards and values of the Council of Europe and constitute a major obstacle to successful social inclusion of Roma and full respect of their human rights.³

In 2018, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) published a report on antigypsyism, analysing trends between 2011 and 2016 in access to education, employment, healthcare and housing, and in manifestations of antigypsyism such as discrimination, harassment and hate crime. The results show that, on average, one out of three Roma surveyed had experienced some form of harassment in 2016, such as offensive or threatening personal comments, personal threats of violence, offensive gestures or inappropriate staring.⁴

On 22 January 2020, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted the *Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion 2020-2025*⁵ to combat antigypsyism and discrimination and to

¹ The 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. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

² [Council of Europe European Commission against Racism and Intolerance \(ECRI\) General Policy Recommendation No.13 on combating antigypsyism and discrimination against Roma \(adopted on 24 June 2011, amended on 2 December 2020\)](#) (page 3)

³ Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the rise of anti-Gypsyism and racist violence against Roma in Europe, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 1 February 2012 at the 1132nd meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies.

⁴ [Fundamental Rights Agency \(2018\)A persisting concern: anti-Gypsyism as a barrier to Roma inclusion](#)

⁵ [Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion \(2020 2025\)](#)

support equality. The plan reinforces the progress made under the Council of Europe's Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019), which had also tackled anti-Roma and anti-Traveller prejudice, discrimination and crimes with innovative models for local-level solutions and inclusive policies.

In keeping with the Council of Europe's mission and expertise, the Strategic Action Plan focuses on the following three key priority areas, all of which are relevant for combatting antigypsyism:

- combating antigypsyism and discrimination in its diverse forms by raising awareness of the Organisation's standards and instruments, fostering their application and implementation and supporting access to justice;
- ensuring the effective participation of Roma and Travellers in decision-making processes; and
- improving implementation of national and local level Roma inclusion strategies in the areas of inclusive education and local policies (including effective public services).

In order to take stock of the current debates regarding racism and discrimination against Roma and Travellers, and to contribute to a better understanding of the topic, the Council of Europe Secretariat commissioned, on behalf of the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues⁶ (ADI-ROM), a report on the causes, prevalence, and consequences of antigypsyism as well as possible responses to it. The report, written by Dr Iulius Rostas, covers the debate on the terminology of antigypsyism used by different actors, scholars and institutions, and discusses the causes of racism experienced by Roma and describes and analyses its myriad of manifestations and consequences. The report will be presented at the meeting by the author and will form the basis for further discussions with Roma and Traveller civil society and representatives of relevant Council of Europe bodies.

The second part of the meeting will concentrate on presenting recent and current civil society responses to combating antigypsyism, racism and discrimination against Roma and Travellers. The Council of Europe Secretariat will present concrete examples of how its operational work and activities in the field, including through Joint Programmes with the European Commission, contribute to combatting discrimination and antigypsyism. The last part of the meeting will be used as an opportunity to discuss concrete tools, measures and mechanisms available to prevent, sanction and punish antigypsyism.

Stemming from the aforementioned report, other presentations, civil society analyses and interventions, the 11th Dialogue meeting will offer the opportunity to discuss the possible responses to racism against Roma and Travellers, and develop conclusions and a set of recommendations and/or effective measures that should be implemented by Council of Europe member States, different institutional actors and by Roma and Traveller civil society organisations themselves.

OBJECTIVES OF THE 11TH DIALOGUE MEETING

The 11th Meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller civil society will focus on combating antigypsyism with the aim to:

- **Provide** an opportunity for joint reflection between representatives of Council of Europe bodies and members of the Council of Europe Secretariat as well as representatives of Roma and Traveller civil society on the causes, characteristics, historical background and different dimensions of antigypsyism;
- **Assess** the prevalence of antigypsyism through analysing recent developments and political trends in member States;
- **Identify and propose** appropriate measures and tools to fight antigypsyism;
- **Provide** an overview of relevant legal and policy instruments as well as practices to combat antigypsyism;

⁶ [Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues \(ADI-ROM\)](#)

- **Discuss** existing Council of Europe recommendations, the role and work of Council of Europe monitoring bodies and of EU-CoE Joint Programmes to combat antigypsyism;
- **Highlight and exchange** examples of good practices and initiatives on combating antigypsyism.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The involvement of Roma and Traveller communities at every level of policy formulation, implementation and follow-up is a key feature of the Council of Europe's approach to Roma and Traveller inclusion. Whilst recognising that the responsibility of Roma and Traveller integration lies first and foremost with the member states, the Council of Europe considers that other actors, such as local and regional authorities, civil society and international organisations, also have an important role to play.

Civil society has the necessary expertise and knowledge about the situation of Roma and Travellers on the ground and can contribute to assisting member States and the Council of Europe in meeting their commitments. The role of Roma and Traveller civil society is to provide support and be the bridge between Roma and Traveller communities and decision and policy makers. As complementary actors, they can facilitate the directions of Council of Europe actions through constructive and mutual dialogue. The 11th Dialogue meeting will serve as a consultation platform for assessing the successes and challenges in the joint fight against antigypsyism. It will also serve as a forum for Roma and Traveller civil society organisations and other stakeholders to improve their knowledge, exchange experiences and share best practices, plan future co-operation activities and identify possibilities for promoting measures against antigypsyism.

PARTICIPATION

25 civil society participants will be chosen through an open call disseminated via the Roma and Travellers Team public website and distribution lists.

Participants will be representatives of Roma and Traveller organisations, including representatives of youth and women organisations, and experts from international, national and local civil society organisations.

Priority is given to representatives who hold specific expertise in the area of fighting against antigypsyism and discrimination and have been working with the Council of Europe. Participants must be competent to work in English or French or Romani, the working languages of the meeting.

DATES AND VENUE

The meeting will take place online on 29 April 2021 from 09:30-15:30 and on 30 April 2021 from 10:00-13:00 via the KUDO conferencing system.

11th Dialogue meeting – working and background documents:

- Agenda of the 11th Dialogue meeting
- Concept Paper of the 11th Dialogue meeting
- [Council of Europe Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion \(2020-2025\)](#)
- [Council of Europe European Commission against Racism and Intolerance \(ECRI\) General Policy Recommendation No.13 on combating antigypsyism and discrimination against Roma \(adopted on 24 June 2011, amended on 2 December 2020\)](#)
- Conclusions and Recommendations of the 10th Dialogue meeting

COUNCIL OF EUROPE RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)10 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on improving access to justice for Roma and Travellers in Europe](#)
- [Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the Rise of Anti-Gypsyism and Racist Violence against Roma in Europe](#)
- [Resolution 2153 \(2017\) Promoting the inclusion of Roma and Travellers](#)
- [Resolution 1927 \(2013\) Ending discrimination against Roma children](#)
- [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2012\)9 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on mediation as an effective tool for promoting respect for human rights and social inclusion of Roma](#)
- [Resolution 1760 \(2010\) of the Parliamentary Assembly on the recent rise in national security discourse in Europe: the case of Roma](#)

OTHER RELEVANT BACKGROUND MATERIAL

- [Center for European Policy Studies \(2017\) Combating Institutional Anti-Gypsyism: Responses and promising practices in the EU and selected Member States](#)
- [Federal Chancellery of Republic of Austria \(2019\) Expert recommendations on how to address anti-Gypsyism in a post-2020 EU Roma Framework. Conference on anti-Gypsyism arranged 27 November 2018 in Vienna](#)
- [Alliance against Antigypsyism \(2019\) Combating antigypsyism in the post-2020 EU Roma Framework Recommendations](#)
- [European Commission \(2018\) EU High Level Group on combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, "Antigypsyism: Increasing its Recognition to Better Understand and Address its Manifestations](#)
- [European Parliament resolution of 25 October 2017 on fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration in the EU: fighting anti-Gypsyism](#)
- [European Parliament \(2019\) "Motion for a resolution on the need for a strengthened post-2020 Strategic EU Framework for National Roma Inclusion Strategies and stepping up the fight against anti-Gypsyism"](#)
- [European Parliament \(2019\) Scaling up Roma Inclusion Strategies; Truth, reconciliation and justice for addressing antigypsyism](#)
- [Fundamental Rights Agency \(2018\)A persisting concern: anti-Gypsyism as a barrier to Roma inclusion](#)