

Thank you very much Madam Chair. In april 2010 the European Commission adopted a detailed communication entitled "The social and economic integration of the Roma". My intervention is based exclusively on this European Commission communication which I would be quite happy to circulate to interested delegates. Roma people form the largest ethnic minority in the EU and a significant part of the 10 to 12 million Roma that live in Europe live in extreme marginalisation in both rural and urban area and in very poor social and economic conditions. The discrimination, social exclusion and segregation which Roma face are mutually reinforcing. They face limited access to high quality education, difficulties of integration into the labour market, corresponding low income levels and poor health which in turn results in higher mortality rates and lower life expectancy compared with non-Roma. The complexity and interdependence of the problems calls for sustainable responses which tackle all aspects of Roma deprivations through a integrated approach.

Measures to overcome Roma exclusion need to be set within the wider framework of European equality, inclusion and growth policies and to optimise the use of the legal and financial instruments available also to mainstream society. The overall objective is an inclusive society not a new form of ethnic segregation. Any progress that can be achieved in the area of Roma inclusion represents progress to the inclusion of all ethnic minorities in the EU and vice versa. The European Platform for Roma Inclusion composes of key players from EU institutions, international organisations, member states, governments and civil society was launched in April 2009 with the objective of increasing the coherence and effectiveness of the parallel policy processes at national, European and international level with a view to creating synergies. The common basic principles for Roma inclusion drawn up on the Platform process and distilled from the experiences of successful Roma inclusion initiatives provide a practical framework for public policy makers at all levels on how to design and implement successful initiatives, for example the second of the ten principles, explicitly non-exclusive targeting was used to justify the Commission proposal in 2009 to modify the European Regional Development Fund regulation. The European Commission is also implementing a pilot project in Roma inclusion initiated by European Parliament, addressing early childhood education, self-employment through micro-credit and public awareness. The pilot project will explore methods for data collection and counter-factual evaluation to assess the impact of the intervention in these three fields.

In conclusion the EU will build on the strong mobilisation in the EU institutions, members states, and international organisations, and within civil society in support of the better social and economic integration of the Roma.

Thank you very much for your attention.