

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

Forum on Minority Issues 30 November to 1 December 2023

EU Intervention

Minorities and Cohesive Societies: Equality, Social Inclusion, and Socio-economic Participation

Mr. Chairperson,

The European Union welcomes the focus of the 16th Forum of Minority Issues and we are pleased to engage in this debate.

We are witnessing a growing resistance to the universality of human rights, as well as against multi-cultural and multi-ethnic co-existence. Therefore, it is becoming ever more critical to defend the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

The EU emphatically reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the full realization of the UN declaration on the rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. The Declaration remains a milestone for the promotion and protection of the rights of persons belonging to minorities and it gives guidance and sets standards, inter alia, on non-discrimination, the use of mother tongue and the effective participation in decision-making.

An essential step in addressing discrimination and the marginalization of persons belonging to minorities is to ensure that the relevant checks and balances are in place to uphold and protect their rights within our societies. This involves enhancing both institutional frameworks and support for human rights organizations and defenders. In this context, the EU calls for a strengthened role for independent National Human Rights Institutions in accordance with the Paris Principles and recalls the important contribution of the national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up.

Addressing persistent challenges and discrimination faced by persons belonging to minority groups is imperative for building a just society. Minority women and girls often bear a disproportionate burden, enduring unique obstacles due to their intersecting identities. These challenges hinder social mobility and economic opportunities, perpetuating inequality. To combat this, it is crucial to explore and rectify policies and practices that either result in or exacerbate minority exclusion and disadvantages.

To this end, the EU places a strong emphasis on promoting equality, social inclusion, and socio-economic participation, with a particular focus on marginalized communities, such as the Roma. Recognizing the need for a comprehensive framework, the EU Roma 2020-2030 strategy adopts an intersectional approach, acknowledging that all Roma individuals can experience discrimination and disempowerment. The framework aligns with other EU initiatives, contributing to anti-racism endeavours, the European pillar of social rights, and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The framework sets quantitative targets to monitor progress, aiming to reduce disparities between Roma and the general population.

Furthermore, the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025 sets out a series of measures to step up action and to bring together actors at all levels to address racism more effectively in the EU.

This forum serves as a primary space for persons belonging to minorities to speak for themselves, which we respect. We confirm that we will continue to address issues of persons belonging to minorities where their representatives have no or only limited access to speak themselves, including at the Human Rights Council and other fora.

I thank you.