



EUROPEAN ROMA INFORMATION OFFICE

PRESS RELEASE

The European Roma Information Office (ERIO) welcomes today's decision of the European Parliament, related to the use of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). With this move, the European Parliament has given its green light to a proposal of the European Commission, which refers to the use of the ERDF to improve the housing situation of poor and disadvantaged communities. This proposal, previously agreed by EU Member States, will benefit the Roma communities, which in most cases live in segregated and substandard living conditions.

The adopted measures will extend the use of the ERDF to cover housing interventions for marginalized groups as it is explicitly but not exclusively targeting Roma.

In the past, structural funds were restricted for housing interventions, which limited eligibility to the twelve new European Union Member States. The newly adopted measures cover replacement of existing houses as well as the construction of new ones, in both rural and urban areas. However, the funding would not apply to private ownership but to projects that are implemented by public authorities. The European Parliament defended this reform for the first time in 2009.

Housing is recognized as a crucial factor for Roma's social inclusion. Yet, it should also form part of an "integrated approach" designed and implemented by national and regional authorities to cover other issues such as education, skills development, employment and health.

Mr. Ivan Ivanov, Executive Director of the European Roma Information Office (ERIO) states that: "The adoption of such measures will have a profound impact on the future of the Roma communities living in ghettos and subhuman conditions. In essence the road to a Strategic approach in reference to Roma involves three tools: legislation, governmental policies and funding. Legislation and policies have existed for decades, and policies have been passed, however their ineffective implementation has been deterrent for the improvement of Roma situation. Thus, funding for the improvement of housing will perhaps lead to reformation in other problematic aspects of the Roma community. The decision of the European Parliament comes just in time, when Roma communities mostly need urgent actions to change their lives -which anyway have

worsened by the global financial crisis-, and this comes also as a proof that the EU considers the 2010 European Year Against Poverty as a starting point to seriously address poverty in Europe”.

Brussels, May 20, 2010

European Roma Information Office
Av. Edouard Lacomble 17, Brussels- 1040, Belgium
Phone: 0032-2-733-3462
Fax: 0032-2-733-3875
www.erionet.org