



## **European Roma Information Office (ERIO) comments on the 2010 - Work Programme's Draft of the Fundamental Rights Agency**

ERIO welcomes the consultation of the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) on its 2010 Work Programme with the members of FRA's Civil Society Platform. This reaffirms the FRA's commitment to building a structured dialogue with Civil Society. Recent developments have shown that fundamental rights of large parts of the Roma population are not adequately protected: many Roma are facing restrictions on their right to free movement; they are victims of racist attacks without effective action and justice; and, are criminalised through discriminatory policing. The FRA can play a key role in contributing to an effective protection of the fundamental rights of the Roma population. Meanwhile, ERIO would also like to contribute some input to an improved design of the FRA Work Plan for 2010.

### **Roma and Travellers**

The situation of Roma and Travellers has devoted a section in the Work Plan for 2010. This indicates the FRA's strategy to apply a "targeting approach" what is needed in order to meet the specific needs of the Roma communities. Nevertheless, objectives should be complemented with mainstreaming in order to address the complexity of the social exclusion and discrimination faced by the Roma. The following fields specifically lack a focus on Roma

### **Education**

In view of the desolate situation of large parts of Roma in the educational systems, urgent action is required to promote their (re-) integration into mainstream education. In most countries, Roma children and young people attend segregated schools which offer a very low quality of education, consequently preventing them access to higher education and to adequate employment. The school segregation is related not only to the social exclusion faced by the Roma, but is also a result of, in many cases, discriminatory and even racist practices of school officials and education administrators.

- In order to contribute to the promotion of equality in the education system, the FRA activities in Human Rights Education and development should focus on raising awareness of the need to implement desegregation policies targeting Roma children and young people, especially in the countries with representative Roma communities. Actions in this field should also promote the carrying out of non-discrimination campaigns at school. Such activities should be coordinated by government agencies and non-government organisations which promote school desegregation and a school free of discrimination at the national level.

These activities should take place under key components b) communication and raising awareness and c) networking and education

### **Civil rights**

The massive expulsions of Romanian citizens of Roma origin in Italy and the “finger printing affair” has shown that the Roma can be restricted in exercising their full right to the freedom of movement unlike other EU citizens. Nevertheless, discriminatory practices like these take place everywhere throughout Europe. This is not an only civil right which is not effectively guaranteed in the case of the Roma. Recent developments have shown that their full protection should be immediately ensured.

- In order to contribute to the full exercise of the freedom of movement by EU and non-EU citizens of Roma origin, the FRA should carry out surveys whether the aforementioned civil right of the Roma is fully guaranteed through legislation and policy measures.

This activity should take place under key component a) research and analysis.

### **Political participation**

As empirical evidence shows, the Roma are very underrepresented in the political system: there are only two Roma members in the European Parliament and only in Bulgaria and Romania are there Roma members in national parliaments; the share of the Roma vote is very low in comparison to citizens of the national majority; the presence of Roma in mainstream parties is almost inexistent; In addition, Roma are excluded from political decision making processes. The FRA addresses political and civil participation with regard to immigrants and accessing the right to vote for vulnerable categories of voters.

- Since the Roma are facing even stronger barriers to access to the political scene than those faced by people with a migration background, the FRA activities on civil and political participation should also focus on the Roma. .

These activities should take place under key component a) research and analysis and b) communication and raising awareness.