



## EU Award for Roma<sup>1</sup> Integration in the Western Balkans and Turkey, 2021

With an estimation of 12 million living in Europe, the Roma minority is one of the largest ethnic minorities in Europe. About 1 million Roma live in the Western Balkans and 2.8 million in Turkey, sharing a rich culture and history that is inextricably linked to Europe, but have also faced a long history of exclusion. Yet today many Roma still encounter severe forms of racism, discrimination, social exclusion and poverty. Improving their situation continues to be a key priority for the European Commission which, in October 2020, adopted the new EU Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion and participation 2020-2030.

Since 2014, the Enlargement Award on Roma Inclusion is raising visibility on existing challenges faced by Roma community and the important work of CSOs. The 2021 employment Award aims to confirm the commitment of the European Commission to support and recognize the initiatives taken by private, public and civil society players to foster Roma employment. It will help to draw attention to concrete successful efforts by various relevant players to enhance both access to, and quality of, employment and promote positive models with concrete and sustainable results. Gender equality and the empowerment of Roma women in the area of employment will be an important dimension.

The Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans underlines the particular importance of Roma participation in the labour market. Access to quality employment, both for men and women, is a key condition to ensure sustainable Roma inclusion. Furthermore, the Western Balkans cannot afford to waste the asset that the Roma community could mean to their socio-economic development.

The EU is pushing to improve the social integration of Roma and to provide tangible results on the ground. The European Union is also giving substantial funds for social integration measures through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance.

The Enlargement countries are adopting new Roma inclusion Strategies and related action plans to align with the new EU Roma framework 2020-2030. Most of the efforts to implement the policy strategic framework focus on measures to increase access to education and to decrease drop-out, to foster employment opportunities, to improve health and housing conditions and access to civil documentation. Progress on implementation of the new Strategies will be monitored within the enlargement process.

This year the award will emphasize the importance of Roma employment, as a mechanism to break the circle of exclusion. It will also raise attention to the initiatives taken by different, often unknown, players to substantially increase Roma employment rate and allow Roma full contribution to their country economic development. The award is open to Civil Society (organisations and individuals), public and private institutions (including but not limited to SME, social businesses, entrepreneurship initiatives and other employment initiatives); established and residing in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, The Republic of North Macedonia, Kosovo\* and Turkey.

The award ceremony will take place in the frame of the European Parliament Romani Week 2021.

See below the programs of the awardees stay in Brussels and the Award ceremony.

<sup>1</sup>As it is most commonly used in EU policy documents and discussions, the term "Roma" refers to a variety of groups of people who describe themselves as Roma, Gypsies, Travellers, Manouches, Ashkali, Egyptian, Sinti and other without denying the specificities of these groups.

\*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



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*Romani people are European citizens. Equal and Diverse!*

## EU Award for Roma Integration in the Western Balkans and Turkey 2021”

### Extraordinary People Promoting Equality through Employment

*Venue: Concert Noble, Rue d’Arlon 84, 1040 Brussels*

#### Programme

**16:00 - 16:20** Welcome by

**Marta Garcia Fidalgo**, Advisor Roma inclusion and Equality coordinator  
Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission.

**Adriatik Hasantari**, Director Roma Active Albania and Vice Chair of the  
European Roma Grassroots Organization Network

**16:20 - 16:25** Opening remarks by (Video Statement)

**Olivér Várhelyi** European Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement  
Negotiations, European Commission

**16:25 – 17:40** Announcement of award winners and hand over of Awards

**Ms Marta Garcia Fidalgo** (announcement of winners) **Ms. Katarína Mathernová**,  
Deputy Director-General, Neighbourhood and Enlargement  
Negotiations, European Commission (hand over awards)

**17:40 - 17:50** Conclusion

**Ms. Katarína Mathernová**, Deputy Director-General, Neighbourhood and  
Enlargement Negotiations, European Commission

**17:50 - 18:00** Photo

**18:00 – 18:30** Press point with DG NEAR (Katarína Mathernová) and Award winners

**18:30 – 20:00** Reception



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