

Anti-racism Summit

BREAKOUT SESSION 1: Racialised Communities and Law Enforcement

21 March

14.15-15.30

Connection link: [by clicking on this link](#)

Speech

Good afternoon and many thanks for the invitation to address you.

I am a Romani man, a Sinto, the son of a Holocaust survivor, but I have lost six aunts and uncles during the Holocaust.

I know what sufferance feels like and I wish that nobody will ever have to endure what me and my family had to endure during the darkest times of our history and on a daily basis, the cruel antigypsyism.

This day should serve as a reminder that Romani people – as the largest European ethnic minority – have contributed to Europe’s diversity and enriched our heritage for centuries. However, many of the 10-12 million Romani people in Europe still suffer from poverty and exclusion. The existence of widespread antigypsyism reinforces and aggravates their economic and social deprivation. These inequalities persist despite ongoing efforts at national, European, and international level to tackle prejudice and discrimination.

More than 6 million Romani people live in the European Union, and 80% of them live in extreme poverty.

The European Union still has mayors that often stop the sewerage, electricity, water and gas supply just at the beginning of the poor Romani community, so that they can still use them in times of elections with false promises.

The EU still has segregated communities, where human beings, children, live at the garbage dump, they go to bed hungry, in ghettos, and are often bitten by rats.

This is only a part of a sad image developed from the Members States’ neglect and lack of equal treatment for the inclusion of the largest minority group in the EU.

How can we achieve fair participation for Romani people in a state system in which the principles of the rule of law are disregarded and equal access to justice is not guaranteed for all citizens?

Without a greater commitment, little will change for Romani people on site. I am very glad that we currently have a large majority in the European Parliament that is in favour of a European equality law for Romani people and a rule of law mechanism that ensures respect for fundamental rights as a precondition for the member states to gain access to EU funding.

Only with legislative action will we enable Romani people to exercise their rights as equal citizens and ensure that our financial support gets to where it is urgently needed.

EU has the power to make a Romani Law possible, and the European Parliament already did the first step. The next step must be done by the EU Commission and to propose a legislative text proposal to the Parliament and the Council, in 2022, to make sure Romani people will be treated as equal citizens and I committed to continue this work until the law will become reality.

Thank you very much!

Q&A session

First round: Romeo will be asked this question:

***Q:** In your opening statement, you gave us a full picture of the situation in the EU regarding Romani people and law enforcement. In your capacity as a Member of the European Parliament what is needed for a change to take place?*

ANSWER

I am the first ever Sinto from Germany elected in the European Parliament and I have never forgotten my people. They are the core of my activity. I always knew that change can happen only by law and in 2020 I have started the work on a resolution that is asking for such a change. With a great team and colleagues by my side we have managed to write history on 17th September 2020 when 545 MEPs adopted the resolution that is asking for a Romani Law. Immediately afterwards I was expecting the Commission to draft the legislative text, but they came up with a new Strategic Romani Framework.

The new European Roma Framework for Equality, Inclusion and Participation is a strengthened and more comprehensive version in comparison with the 2011-2020 Framework and I am glad to see that these new elements of the post 2020 EU Roma Strategic Framework reflect largely the claims made in the resolution I have developed for the EP.

Even if this is clear progress, the strategy lacks commitment and control, it is not a LAW.

We need an equality law for Romani people with clear targets and timeline, with clear success and progress indicators, with a robust control mechanism and with an adequate budget for its implementation.

Second round: Romeo will be asked this question:

Q: In your view, what are the main challenges of Member States when it comes to addressing discrimination by law enforcement?

ANSWER

The main challenge is exactly the political will to implement European directives or the lack of a possible law. But this can actually be solved when there is political will. Let me give you a concrete example.

On 15th December 2020, the Romanian Parliament adopted the first ever antigypsyism law in the EU. The law punishes negative attitudes against Romani people with jail. The project includes measures to prevent and combat antigypsyism, including prison sentences for hate speech against Romani people.

According to the project, antigypsyism means both the perception of Romani people expressed as hatred against them, and verbal or physical manifestations motivated by hatred against Romani people, directed against Romani people or their property, against institutions/NGOs, leaders of Romani communities or their places of worship, traditions and the Romani language.

The normative act calls for prison sentences between 3 months and 3 years for those who promote, in public, ideas, concepts or antigypsyist doctrines, make, sell or spread such symbols and between 1 and 5 years for those who distribute or make available to the public materials of the same category.

Change can happen only by law because Romani People are European citizens, equal and diverse.

Thank you!