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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

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Subject: European Court of Auditors Special Report No 14/2016 – "EU policy initiatives and financial support for Roma integration: significant progress made over the last decade, but additional efforts needed on the ground"
- Draft Council Conclusions

1. On 28 June 2016, the European Court of Auditors' published Special Report No 14/2016 entitled "EU policy initiatives and financial support for Roma integration: significant progress made over the last decade, but additional efforts needed on the ground," together with the Commission's replies.¹

¹ The report is available in all official languages on the Court's website: <http://eca.europa.eu>.

2. On 7 September 2016, the Permanent Representatives Committee instructed the Working Party on Social Questions to examine the report in accordance with the rules laid down in the Council Conclusions on improving the examination of special reports drawn up by the Court of Auditors².

 3. The Working Party on Social Questions examined the report at its meetings on 9 and 19 September 2016 and reached an agreement on the draft text as set out in the Annex to this note.

 4. The Permanent Representatives Committee invites the EPSCO Council, at its meeting on 13 October 2016, to adopt the draft Council Conclusions as set out in the Annex to this note.
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² Doc. 7515/00 + COR1

"EU policy initiatives and financial support for Roma integration: significant progress made over the last decade, but additional efforts needed on the ground"

- Draft Council Conclusions

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:

1. WELCOMES the European Court of Auditors Special Report No 14/2016³ and the Commission's detailed replies to it;
2. CONSIDERS it useful that the Court aimed to assess whether the EU policy initiatives and financial support through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF) had contributed effectively to Roma integration and in particular whether the EU framework and the national Roma integration strategies facilitated the effective use of the ERDF and ESF for Roma inclusion measures in each programme period, whether the ERDF and ESF framework for each programme period was designed so as to allow effective support for Roma integration measures and whether projects implemented under the ERDF and the ESF during the 2007-2013 programme period contributed effectively to Roma integration;
3. WELCOMES the Court's acknowledgement that a number of the shortcomings noted for the financial period 2007-2013 have already been addressed in the period 2014-2020;
4. EMPHASIZES the importance of efforts and measures taken by all countries to improve the situation of Roma and the Commission's role in supporting this process, while REAFFIRMING the Member States' primary responsibility in this area;
5. TAKES NOTE of the recommendations formulated by the Court in its Special Report and of the Commission's thorough and constructive response to the Report's conclusions and WELCOMES, moreover, the fact that some of the measures suggested by the Court have already been taken up by the Commission;

³ <http://www.eca.europa.eu/en/Pages/DocItem.aspx?did=36850>

6. REAFFIRMS the importance of EU financial support for social inclusion measures, including measures promoting Roma inclusion;
7. CALLS on Member States to take due account of the Court's recommendations, which are aimed at optimising the use of European funds to improve the situation of Roma on the ground;
8. AGREES with the Court's recommendation whereby the Member States, in accordance with their national practices, should consider making amendments to their National Roma Integration Strategies (NRISs), when revising them, and in particular;
 - a) ensure that civil society organisations and, where applicable, Roma representatives, are systematically consulted and included when Roma integration measures are being planned and implemented;
 - b) define in more detail the role played by the National Roma Contact Points (NRCs) in relation to the NRISs; and
 - c) ensure that the NRCs' powers and responsibilities are commensurate with the resources made available to them;
9. CALLS on the Member States to strengthen their efforts to make use of best practices for Roma integration when making calls for proposals and selecting projects;
10. INVITES the Commission, when examining the criteria for the allocation of funds in the context of the preparation of the next Multiannual Financial Framework, to consider social inclusion challenges as a priority and to address the need for a further targeting of resources to support marginalised communities, such as Roma;

11. CONSIDERS that in line with the subsidiarity principle, the collection of statistical data on ethnicity should be left to the discretion of the Member States, and carried out in accordance with national practices based on national legal frameworks;
 12. NOTES that while due consideration should be given to the recommendations made in the Special Report of the Court with a view to continuing to enhance monitoring, data based on ethnicity are subject to legal and practical limitations; and
 13. CALLS on Member States to aim at a better overview of funds needed to successfully implement the EU policy initiatives to support Roma integration and NRISs.
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