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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	High Level Conference on EU Framework on National Strategies for Roma Inclusion (Bucharest, 4-5 March 2019) - Information by the Presidency

Delegations will find in the Annex a note from the Presidency on the above subject, with a view to the meeting of the Council (EPSCO) on 15 March 2019 (Any Other Business item).

High Level Conference on the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies**Bucharest, 4-5 March 2019****1. Introduction**

Under the motto “cohesion, a common European value”, the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union aims to contribute to ensuring cohesion in Europe, in order to achieve sustainable and equal development opportunities for all citizens and Member States.

It was precisely in order to foster socio-economic cohesion that the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020¹ was adopted in 2011 and complemented in 2013 with a Council Recommendation on effective Roma Integration measures² and in 2016 with Council conclusions³ on accelerating the process of Roma integration, calling for an evaluation of the EU Framework.

In this context, on 4-5 March 2019, the Romanian Presidency organised a High Level Conference on the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. Discussions covered the lessons learned since 2011 at EU and national level in combating the socio-economic exclusion of Roma and discrimination against them. Discussions also focused on the way forward in EU and national Roma policies.

2. Recent policy progress

The European Commission has followed up on the Council's request for a mid-term evaluation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. In December 2018, it adopted a Communication⁴ on the key findings and published a Staff Working Document summarizing the evaluation⁵.

¹ COM(2011)175 final

² OJ C 378, 24.12.2013, 01

³ Council Conclusions on accelerating the process of Roma integration (14294/16)

⁴ COM(2018) 785 final

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/roma-and-eu/mid-term-evaluation-eu-framework-nris_en

On 12 February 2019, the European Parliament adopted a Resolution⁶ on "the need for a strengthened post-2020 Strategic EU Framework for National Roma Inclusion Strategies and stepping up the fight against anti-Gypsyism". The Resolution was supported by six political groups and builds on the European Parliament's resolution of 25 October 2017 on fundamental rights aspects in Roma integration.

3. Conference conclusions

The EU Framework adopted in 2011 is the beginning of a process that, despite many limitations and taking into account the massive task involved, has shown positive results and an initial change in trends.

Stopping targeted EU action on Roma integration after 2020 would risk reducing political commitment and focus on Roma integration in both the EU Member States and enlargement countries.

The effects of the EU Framework are unlikely to last after 2020 if there is no further EU support. Increased efforts at national level are needed as well as more time to consolidate working structures, to further align and mobilise other policy, legal and financial instruments and to better monitor the impact of policies.

Participants invited the Commission to propose an ambitious new EU framework for the post-2020 period on Roma integration and called on Member States and enlargement countries to step up their commitment to Roma integration. Inter alia, they concluded that EU institutions and national governments should pay attention to aspects such as the following:

- There is a need for more effective Roma participation in policy making at all levels. Roma need to be involved in the elaboration and monitoring of the implementation of the post 2020 policies for Roma, both at national and EU level, thus strengthening the Roma voice in the policy process.

⁶ (2019/2509(RSP))

- The flexibility and the non-binding nature of the EU framework has allowed Member States to follow a tailored approach taking account of specific national contexts. A new framework at EU level should provide clearer guidance on goals and measures to be set out in the National Roma Integration Strategies, for example through a set of objectives.
- A future EU framework should more accurately address the specific disadvantages faced by Roma women, children and youth and other groups within the Roma population, including mobile Roma who are EU citizens and Roma who are non-EU nationals. Against this background, there is a need to pay attention to the diversity within the Roma community, with a focus on combating poverty among the most vulnerable groups, including children, women, persons with disabilities, elderly people, etc.
- Continued efforts at EU and national level are needed to halt and break down discrimination, hate speech, hate crime and antigypsyism, which represent obstacles to further progress, possibly through a new non-binding EU initiative, complementing the social inclusion approach.
- It is equally important that Roma needs are better reflected in mainstream policies. National and local authorities should follow a twin strategy of making mainstream services inclusive and providing programmes targeted towards the most vulnerable.