

Caritas draws attention to worsening situation of Roma people in Europe on International Roma Day

Caritas Europa has expressed its concern about the situation of Roma across EU Member States today on 8 April, the International Day of Roma, and is calling for a renewed effort by the EU to promote the full inclusion of Roma people.

According to the most recent Caritas Europa '[Europe 2020 Shadow Report](#)', the Roma population constitutes one of the largest ethnic minorities in Europe – between 10 and 12 million citizens. This minority is spread through the European continent and is highly concentrated in Central and Eastern Europe.

Jorge Nuño-Mayer, Secretary General of Caritas Europa says:

“Across Europe, real progress in improving the living conditions and opportunities for Roma remains limited. Especially in certain countries, a high proportion of Roma persons are affected by extreme poverty and social exclusion. The Roma are the most marginalized ethnic group in Europe, facing deep social problems related to low educational levels, high unemployment, inadequate housing, poor health and wide-ranging discrimination, all of which are interrelated and create a vicious cycle of social exclusion. The situation is worsening due to the current economic crisis and the growth of racist discourses and movements”.

Several Caritas Member Organisations across different Member States have reported that Roma are largely excluded from the mainstream services as well as from labour market training opportunities and access to mainstream education, resulting in exclusion and discrimination. “The crisis has fuelled a growth of pre-existing xenophobic attitudes and debates which chastise Roma for being disproportionately dependent on welfare states and legitimizing the imposition more restrictive social policies and benefits” says Mr Nuño-Mayer. “Furthermore the implementation of social integration measures is deeply affected by stringent budget cuts in this field. Roma people thus find themselves under the pressure of xenophobic impulses and more restrictive social policies”.

According to the Secretary General, many national Caritas organisations are involved in positive initiatives aimed at the Roma population.

Caritas case example: The Var Delegation of Secours Catholique in France has developed a project for Roma families located in Toulon. The project aims to improve the living conditions of the family by providing access to decent housing and by developing microeconomic projects that generate incomes. This improves the stability of families and has a direct and positive impact on Roma children.

Caritas case example: Caritas Georgia has developed a “Youth Club” initiative for street and Roma children. It provides leisure, educational, and training activities to these children in a day centre and also offers catering and washing facilities. Through these activities, healthy lifestyles are promoted and education is provided in order to assist children in gaining the basic knowledge and skills to be independent.

On the International Day of Roma, Caritas Europa is calling for a renewed effort by the EU and its Member States to promote the full inclusion of Roma people in economic and social life, and to guard carefully against the scapegoating of this ethnic group as the economic crisis in Europe continues.

In particular Caritas Europa is calling on the EU and its Member States to:

- End transitional measures imposed on Romanians and Bulgarians people which do not allow an access to regular employment for Roma parents.
- Allow registration for Roma in an employment centre as job applicants in order to access support services and available offers.
- Stop evictions without alternative housing solutions and offers of decent and sustainable rehousing.
- Open in all Member States the right to receive social benefits (in agreement with the national system) for all citizens of the European Union.
- Provide access to vocational training courses.
- Improve the training of social workers involved in working with unaccompanied Roma minors.

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