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Europe's Roma Community

Basic human rights must not be compromised

Bodil Ceballos is a Greens/EFA MEP from Sweden. She is a Member of the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs committee, and also of the Petitions committee. She is also a Member and Co-ordinator of the Security and Defence committee, as well as a substitute Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee. MEP Bodil Ceballos' plenary speech - 25 March 2015 (in Swedish)

International Roma Day on April 8 is not just about celebrating Roma culture, it is also intended to highlight the persecution and discrimination that the Roma people face in all aspects of life. The Greens have long fought for an effective strategy on Roma inclusion, and we continue this work as the European Parliament now prepares a resolution on Roma rights. For several years the EU has been working on a strategy to encourage Roma integration and to empower individuals from Roma backgrounds. The EU has previously adopted a framework for national strategies for Roma integration. Despite this, integration policies for Roma people in Europe are failing. The Greens believe that the most effective and viable strategy would be one proposed by Roma people themselves; Member States should organise the decision-making to ensure elaboration and adoption of such strategies at national level. The European Union – especially the Commission in its function as the guardian of the treaties – must ensure compliance by Member States of what is stated in the framework and national action plans. All are born equal in dignity and rights, according to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. Human dignity is a universal value and applies equally to all people. Despite this, the restriction of human rights continues against the Roma on our continent. Anti-Gypsyism (also called anti-ziganism or anti-Romanyism) is becoming increasingly common across Europe. Roma are denied their basic rights when it comes to housing, education and healthcare, which should be on equal terms with other citizens. There are EU funds available which are targeted at improving Roma living conditions, education, health care and job opportunities. Many Member States choose not to use these funds, thereby actively and blatantly showing contempt for basic human rights. The Roma belong in Europe and should be treated like any other citizen, regardless of their origins. Until the day comes where every government is making their utmost efforts to create equal opportunities for Roma, the EU cannot claim to be a union where fundamental rights are protected.

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