



**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA**

**STATEMENT OF THE COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN AFFAIRS AND
OVERSIGHT OF THE EUROPEAN FUNDS REGARDING THE EU
FRAMEWORK FOR NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES BY
2020**

At a regular sitting, held on November 23, 2011, the Committee on European Affairs and Oversight of the European Funds (CEAOEF) discussed the **EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies by 2020 COM(2011) 173**, included as item 13 of the Annual Work Programme (AWP) on EU Affairs (2011) of the Bulgarian Parliament.

After the discussion on the **EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies by 2020**, the Bulgarian Parliament via the Committee on European Affairs and Oversight of the European Funds expresses the following Statement, which is to be sent to the European Institutions:

Regarding the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies by 2020 COM (2011)173:

1. **The Committee on European Affairs and Oversight of the European Funds (CEAOEF) welcomes the approach for creation of a common European framework encompassing the measures for integration of Roma minorities** to the fullest extent. This framework should also be viewed in the context of the **European Union's Europe 2020 strategy**, which plots a new road to intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth. To ensure that the defined priorities lead to tangible results, there should be measurable indicators and these indicators should be set both at EU level and in the national strategies.
 - **CEAOEF encourages the search for synergy** between the Roma integration strategy and other EU strategies (e.g. the **EU Strategy for the Danube Region**, which presents the largest concentration of citizens of Roma origin).
 - **CEAOEF expresses its satisfaction with the vision-strategy-plan approach** to the development of the National Roma integration strategy, the implementation of which relies on the inclusion not only of central government agencies but also of local authorities and local self-governance bodies in collaboration with civil society organisations and all stakeholders.

2. **CEAOEF believes that the key** to achieving tangible results and increasing the successfulness of the measures aimed at addressing the marginalization of certain communities is **to educate society in single rules and principles**. **The social and economic integration of Roma is a bilateral process, which requires the majority of non-Roma citizens as well as Roma community members to change their attitudes**. **A guiding principle in the implementation of community integration policies must be the rule of law**.

- **CEAOEF holds the view that coordination of and bilateral commitment to the implementation of the activities and to the respect of common rules would produce much more sustainable results over time.**
 - **A positive impact on such a development would have a single legal basis which places all participants in the process on equal footing.**
3. **CEAOEF also draws the attention to the vulnerability of minorities, including the Roma minority and thus encourages the measures undertaken by the Ministry of Interior for countering illegal migration and trafficking of human beings inasmuch as these affect, among others, members of minority groups.** In this context, during the next programming period it would be appropriate to envisage, **in the framework of EU funding, the possibility to support activities aimed at protection of the most vulnerable individuals** in the ethnic minorities, who become targets of discrimination and violence within their own communities.
 4. **CEAOEF holds the view that the efficient absorption of the financial means available from EU programmes and instruments** will contribute to the successful economic and social integration of Roma minorities, which live mainly in underdeveloped regions. **CEAOEF believes that an integrated approach should be applied in the utilisation of the financial sources available for measures aimed at inclusion of marginalized social communities, including Roma.** Moreover, Bulgaria has already proven its ability to successfully apply the **model of cross-funding** between several Operational Programmes within the ERDF and the ESF (OPRD and OPHRD, which helps achieve much more sustainable results such as lasting **deinstitutionalisation of several groups of persons**, with a strong bearing to the Roma minority).
 - **CEAOEF encourages the definition of funding measures which are not limited solely and exclusively to the Roma community, in order to avoid segregation.** Such an approach is used by the MA of OPHRD stressing that representatives of the Roma community can participate practically in all interventions under the OP. This promotes the good practice of encouraging the proactive involvement of all stakeholders in the process, higher level of integration and **partner commitment for achievement of visible results.**
 5. **CEAOEF welcomes the stronger coordinating role of the European Commission** in terms of “progress measurement” and shares the view that detailed monitoring on the implementation of National Roma integration strategies on the part of Member-States and stakeholders is a good method for **increasing transparency and accountability** with the ultimate aim of ensuring most efficient results of the Roma integration efforts. To this end, **CEAOEF notes that it would be appropriate to ask for production of reports** on the spending of funds under the measures which are relevant to the integration of Roma and to ensure reporting of the **actual achievements** in this area, because so far there has been a **lack of concrete data** at national as well as at EU level. The accomplishment of such accountability and transparency would enable the application of the **funding for real results** mechanism during the next EU Funds programming exercise.