



## PRESS RELEASE

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### EU Roma Summit: How about concrete commitments this time round?

Ahead of the second EU Roma Summit taking place on 8 and 9 April in Spain, the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) calls on the European Union and its member states to commit to develop a comprehensive strategy for Roma inclusion that will secure real change in the lives of the ten million Roma in Europe.

Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities in Europe continue to experience widespread discrimination, exclusion and racist violence, and have been identified by ENAR as being one of the most vulnerable minority groups in essentially all areas of life, from education and housing to employment and healthcare.

ENAR President Mohammed Aziz said: “The fact that the Roma Summit coincides with International Roma Day, celebrated every year on 8 April, makes it doubly meaningful to take concrete action to ensure equality for all Roma in Europe.”

Action is all the more urgent in these times of economic crisis, where the Roma tend to become easy ‘scapegoats’ and several European countries have witnessed an increase in the number of violent hate crimes against Roma.

The strategic approaches proposed in the European Commission’s Communication<sup>1</sup> published today can be built upon to develop an integrated and comprehensive EU Roma strategy but are not sufficient as such. Such a strategy should ensure that Roma communities are protected from discrimination, have equal access to education, healthcare and housing, and are empowered through participation in the civic and economic life of their country. EU leaders must also be firm in challenging extremist groups and condemning hate speech and racist violence.

“The Summit must demonstrate that there is real political will to make a step change in the lives of Roma in Europe. The success of policies that address the real needs of Roma communities will also depend on strong cooperation between all actors - from EU institutions and member states to local communities”, said Mohammed Aziz.

*The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) is a network of NGOs working to combat racism in all EU member states and represents more than 600 NGOs spread around the European Union. ENAR aims to fight racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, to promote equality of treatment between EU citizens and third country nationals, and to link local/regional/national and European initiatives.*

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission Communication “The social and economic integration of the Roma in Europe”, available at <http://ec.europa.eu/roma>.