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EQUALITY

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Dear Mr Lee,

Thank you for the letter you sent on behalf of nine NGOs concerning the increased risk for marginalised Roma and other disadvantaged communities in the Coronavirus crisis due to their precarious living conditions. I fully agree with you that in this exceptional situation, it is more important than ever to demonstrate solidarity with all those exposed to greater risks.

I want to ensure that the EU funded emergency measures of the Member States do not exclude those most in need and provide inter alia for the following: that everybody gets an equal access to healthcare and shelter; that food and drinking water is available for all people; that key sanitation products and medicines are delivered. The Member States are encouraged to use the potential of field workers and medical mediators working in these communities to safely deliver awareness raising about the illness, education material and other support badly needed in these critical times.

I also want to assure you that even in the context of the Coronavirus pandemic equality legislation is fully enforced. This implies that all public authorities and politicians should refrain from any stigmatisation, “ethnicization” or Roma scapegoating of the pandemic. The Council Framework Decision on combating certain forms of racism and xenophobia is the tool to fight against hate speech and hate crime based on ethnic origin. It obliges Member States to criminalise such conduct. The Commission also monitors compliance of Member States with the Racial Equality Directive, which prohibits discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin in a number of fields. Roma as an ethnic minority fall within the protection of this Directive.

I am fully committed to put forward a reformed and strengthened post-2020 EU initiative for Roma equality, inclusion and participation with stronger focus on the fight against discrimination and antigypsyism that goes hand in hand with social inclusion, more effective Roma and civil participation in all stages of the policy process and better reflecting diversity among Roma. The post 2020 EU initiative will also promote a twin approach making mainstream policies more inclusive and providing targeted support to the most vulnerable, and improve target setting, data collection, reporting and monitoring.

Thank you again for raising the issue of marginalised Roma and other disadvantaged groups in this global Coronavirus pandemic.

I look forward to continued collaboration with civil society organisations in building a healthy and flourishing civil society and promoting equality, inclusion and participation of Roma across Europe.

Yours sincerely,

(e-signed)
Helena Dalli

Jonathan Lee
Advocacy & Communication Manager
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