



Statement condemning anti-Roma statements made by French Interior Minister

Brussels, 1 October 2013

The European Roma Information Office (ERIO) strongly condemns recent anti-Roma statements made by French Interior Minister Manuel Valls. On 24 September, Mr. Valls blamed Roma for failing to integrate into French society, and claimed that their way of life *'is extremely different from ours'*. Further, Mr. Valls stated that France does not *'have the obligation to welcome these populations'*, and that *'the majority [of Roma] should be delivered back to the borders ... We are not here to welcome these people. I'd remind you of [former Socialist premier] Michel Rocard's statement: It's not France's job to deal with the misery of the whole world'*. Despite widespread criticism, Mr. Valls defended his remarks.

Mr. Valls statements are extremely stigmatising fuelling anti-Gypsyism, and are particularly concerning given the contemporary climate in France towards Roma migrants. Significant numbers of Roma have been forcibly evicted from illegal settlements and expelled from French territory in the last years. In addition, public officials commonly make statements denigrating and stigmatising Roma, who are frequently linked to discussions on criminality and public order. Such remarks reflect and reproduce the rising trends in anti-Roma sentiment, racism, xenophobia and far-right extremism in Europe. In addition, these statements have been made at a time when France – along with all other member states – should be implementing its National Roma Integration Strategy. The aim of these strategies is to ensure the non-discrimination and social inclusion of Roma across Europe – a goal that appears at odds with Mr. Valls discourse.

ERIO calls on Mr. Valls and all politicians and public officials in the EU to refrain from engaging with anti-Roma discourses that stigmatise Roma people, and may also serve to incite acts of racially motivated violence. Further, ERIO calls on both French and EU institutions, as well as civil society, to strongly condemn and oppose all forms of discriminatory political speech and to uphold the fundamental rights of Roma as citizens of the EU.

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European Roma Information Office (ERIO) is an international advocacy organisation which promotes political and public discussion on Roma issues. It aims to combat racist discrimination against Roma and to contribute to an improved public awareness of the problems faced by Roma communities.

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