

Brussels, 18 May 2011

Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council, 19 May 2011, Brussels

The Council of EU Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Ministers will meet on 19 May in Brussels. The European Commission will be represented by Vice-President Viviane Reding, EU Justice Commissioner, and László Andor, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. The main agenda item for employment and social inclusion is the official presentation of the EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies up to 2020, an exchange of views and the adoption of Council Conclusions.

EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies

Europe's 10-12 million Roma continue to face discrimination, exclusion and the denial of their rights, while governments lose out on increased revenue and productivity because potential talent could go to waste. Better economic and social integration is an imperative – but to be effective, concerted action is needed at all levels to address the multiple causes of exclusion. On 5 April, the Commission put forward an EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies ([IP11/400](#), [MEMO/11/216](#)).

What is expected at this Council?

The Commission will present its Communication on an EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies. The Council will hold a debate on the Commission Communication and adopt a set of conclusions.

What are the next steps?

- 19 May: Employment and Social Affairs Ministers will adopt conclusions and a report will be submitted by the Hungarian presidency on 23 May: The report will be based on the discussions in the different Council formations (EPSCO of 19 May; Education, Youth and Culture (EYC) of 20 May; Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) of 11 April). It will be submitted to the General Affairs Council, where there will be an orientation debate.
- 24 June: The report will then be submitted to the European Council for endorsement by heads of State or government.
- Following endorsement of the report by the European Council, Member States will have to submit national Roma strategies by the end of 2011 specifying how they will contribute to the achievement of these goals.

Commission position: The Framework will help guide national Roma policies and mobilise funds available at EU level to support integration efforts. The Framework focuses on four pillars: access to education, jobs, healthcare and housing. Member States should set individual national Roma integration goals that reflect each of their population sizes and the current status of their integration policies.

Background: The Roma – Europe’s largest ethnic minority – have been part of Europe for centuries, but frequently face prejudice, intolerance and discrimination.

Many of the areas for improving Roma integration – such as education, employment, health and housing – are primarily national or regional responsibilities. However, the EU has an important role in coordinating action by Member States and helping with financial instruments, including the Structural Funds.

In summer 2010, the European Commission publicly defended the position that Roma are EU citizens and should benefit fully from their rights and comply with their obligations under EU law ([SPEECH/10/428](#) and [MEMO/10/502](#)).