

## THE NEW EUROPEAN COMMISSION

### EU: new Commissioners team unveiled

European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso unveiled his team for the next five years. Viviane Reding from Luxembourg will take the Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship portfolio, that has been split from Internal Affairs (this portfolio is assigned to Swedish former EU Affairs minister Cecilia Malmström). Reding will also serve as European Commission vice-president. Employment and Social Affairs will be competence of Hungary's László Andor, while Cyprian Androulla Vassiliou will take care of Education, Culture and Youth. Changes will take place also in the architecture of the Commission's Directorates General. The Citizenship Unit (EAC D.4) will move from DG Education and Culture to DG Communication. The Equality between Men/Women, Action against Discrimination, Civil Society Directorate EMPL G will remain within DG Employment but be placed under the responsibility of the commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, Viviane Reding. The Commissioners-designate will present themselves in the hearings before the European Parliament in January. The new College will have 7 Vice-Presidents, including Vice-President Baroness Catherine Ashton who will, at the same time, be the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December next. Three of the Vice-Presidents will be women. The new College will have 27 members, including President Barroso, one from each Member State. It includes 9 women. The members of the College come from different political families, notably the European People's Party (EPP), the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S & D), and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE). 14 members, including the President, were already members of the outgoing College. President Barroso has given a new look to the College of his second mandate. He has announced a number of new portfolios: Climate Action; Home Affairs; Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship. He has reconfigured a number of other portfolios: Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth; Health and Consumer Policy; Industry and Entrepreneurship; Research and Innovation; International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response. There will be a new emphasis on inclusion in the Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion portfolio, and a renewed focus with the Digital Agenda portfolio.

Source: EC Press Service, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1837&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&quiLanguage=en>

### Responsibilities of the Commissioners-designate

- Joaquín ALMUNIA: Competition. Vice-President of the Commission.
- László ANDOR: Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.
- Baroness Catherine ASHTON: High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security and Vice-President of the Commission.
- Michel BARNIER: Internal Market and Services.
- Dacian CIOLOS: Agriculture and Rural Development.
- John DALLI: Health and Consumer Policy.
- Maria DAMANAKI: Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.
- Karel DE GUCHT: Trade.
- Štefan FÜLE: Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy. \*

- Johannes HAHN: Regional Policy.
  - Connie HEDEGAARD: Climate Action.
  - Maire GEOGHEGAN-QUINN: Research and Innovation.
  - Rumiana JELEVA: International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response. \*
  - Siim KALLAS: Transport. Vice-President of the Commission.
  - Neelie KROES: Digital Agenda. Vice-President of the Commission.
  - Janusz LEWANDOWSKI: Budget and Financial Programming.
  - Cecilia MALMSTRÖM: Home Affairs.
  - Günter OETTINGER: Energy.
  - Andris PIEBALGS: Development.\*
  - Janez POTOČNIK: Environment.
  - Viviane REDING: Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship. Vice-President of the Commission.
  - Olli REHN: Economic and Monetary Affairs.
  - Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ: Vice-President of the Commission for Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration.
  - Algirdas ŠEMETA: Taxation and Customs Union, Audit and Anti-Fraud.
  - Antonio TAJANI: Industry and Entrepreneurship. Vice-President of the Commission.
  - Androulla VASSILIOU: Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth.
- \* In close cooperation with the High Representative/Vice-President in accordance with the treaties.

## ERIO ACTIVITIES

### ERIO at the Equality Summit in Stockholm

The Equality Summit held in Stockholm last week, following its predecessors in Berlin 2007 and in Paris last year, has as its main theme cooperation for equality between different stakeholders and different levels. The aim of the Equality Summit was to promote equal rights and equal opportunities for all in the European Union and to share knowledge and experience in order to develop more effective ways of counteracting all forms of discrimination. ERIO's Executive Director, Ivan Ivanov participated at the event. He attended the workshop on Media, where media stakeholders have gathered together to explore and debate the ways in which media contribute to equality and diversity in a Europe of difference and democratic vitality. Mr. Ivan Ivanov stressed that in such a forum concerning equality there are no Roma speakers and interestingly all key note speakers express their concerns on Roma's situation in Europe. Nevertheless, Roma are not given the chance to share their experience and concerns themselves but again someone else is talking on their behalf.

### ERIO at the meeting on Roma social inclusion and promoting Roma identity and culture in Helsinki

The Executive Director ERIO was invited as a guest speaker to a meeting on Roma social inclusion and promoting Roma identity and culture in Helsinki. The event was organised by the Swedish permanent representation to EU and the Finnish Cultural Foundation. Mr. Ivanov stated in his speech that it is a time that Roma are given the chance to participate in the policy design and given responsibility in the implementation process. They should not be anymore passive beneficiaries of policies designed without their participation. He repeated several times that "Roma culture is not a special culture. It is not an exotic culture which should be considered as an outside

Europe culture. Roma have been here for many centuries and they have contributed to and influenced their national cultures. Roma are Europeans and the same as anybody else in Europe, but for some historic reasons and negative policies, prejudices and perceptions have cumulated so much that they result in a racist behaviour against them".

### **ERIO's participation in the Platform for Intercultural Europe**

On November 20th-21st, ERIO participated in the Second Regional Practice Exchange on Intercultural Capacity-Building in Organisations of the Platform for Intercultural Europe. ERIO is member of the Platform's Steering Group. The event was organised in cooperation with IG Kultur Österreich. Participants from Austria and various EU countries discussed on the self-organisation and self-representation of migrants and minorities in the socio-cultural domain and assess the need for structural change. The organizers stated that the active participation of migrants or minorities in socio-cultural production means their opportunity to shape society. ERIO's Policy Officer, Guillermo Ruiz, pointed out that migrants' and minorities' organisations should work together aiming at influencing politics and enhancing their participation in decision making processes. The outcomes and recommendations from this practice exchange will be reflected in the advocacy strategy of the Platform for Intercultural Europe which is the main interlocutor of the European Commission with regard to promoting intercultural dialogue.

### **ERIO's Survey on Data Collection**

ERIO published its survey on data collection together with definitions and explanations on the benefits of ethnic data to combat indirect discrimination against Roma. The brochure also refers to Roma's fears and concerns 'to accept data collection as well as the reasons which make Roma to take one position or another on this sensitive and highly debatable issue.

Read it on: <http://erionet.org/site/upload/surveys/Data%20Collection%20Survey.pdf>

## **EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS**

### **Coe dialogues with Hungary PM to eradicate intolerance and discrimination**

Strasbourg, 26/11/09 - The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg, published today a letter sent to the Prime Minister of Hungary, Mr Gordon Bajnai, on the fight against intolerance, discrimination and racism affecting members of minority groups, in particular Roma. The letter follows the Commissioner's visit to Hungary last October during which he held discussions with the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Justice and Law Enforcement as well as with other representatives of national authorities, international and non-governmental organisations. In his letter, the Commissioner reiterates his grave concern about the observed rise of extremism, intolerance and racism which has targeted in particular Roma. He is also worried by the public use of anti-Roma, hate speech by certain public figures and by the lack of strong condemnation of and effective measures for preventing similar incidents. While welcoming some positive measures undertaken by the Hungarian government like those aimed at integrating Roma into the public sector, Commissioner Hammarberg stresses that such measures should be accompanied by activities to increase public awareness of the situation of national minorities and other communities which suffer from discrimination or intolerance, such as the Roma, the Jewish community and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) people. Finally, the Commissioner recommends the ratification by Hungary of Protocol N° 12 to the Euro-

pean Convention on Human Rights, containing a general prohibition of discrimination, and the acceptance of the collective complaints procedure under the European Social Charter.

Source: CoE Press Service

## ROMA NEWS FROM AROUND EUROPE

### Italy: pictures form 'Sartoria Rom'

Rome, 27/11/09 – The online edition of Repubblica, a major Italian newspaper, published the pictures took by photographer Antonella Di Girolamo on the 'Sartoria Rom' (Rom taylors), an initiative that aims to integrate Roma women in the labour market.

Watch the pictures at: <http://www.repubblica.it/2006/05/gallerie/cronaca/sartoria-rom/1.html>

### Spain: Congress agrees on fostering a European policy on Roma

The Congress of Deputies, at the behest of the socialist group, unanimously supported a motion law for a European approach to promote policies of inclusion of the Roma population. The motion law, which had a total of 340 favourable votes, also supports the holding in Cordoba for the second European Summit on the inclusion of the Roma on April 8th 2010, dedicating a space for discussion of Roma women in Spain and in Europe. The socialist parliamentary group pointed out in the House that the Roma people is part of the Spanish social reality since the fifteenth century, but which for centuries laws were enacted intended to cancel their identity and force their assimilation or disappearance. Combating all forms of discrimination, defence of values such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality and respect for human rights, including rights of minorities and promote equal opportunities for all have been some of the wishes of the Congress by the socialist group. On the occasion of the Spanish Presidency of the European Union, Cordova will host the second European Summit on the inclusion of the Roma, an "excellent chance for Spain to play a leading role in advancing European approach to policies for inclusion of this group" according to the socialist group. Meanwhile, CiU has stressed the importance of "join forces" in the semester of EU presidency to adopt an institutional statement in recognition of the Roma people.

Source (in Spanish): <http://www.adn.es/sociedad/20091124/NWS-2814-Congreso-politicas-impulsar-europeo-enfoque.html>

### Hungary: riot police break up neo-Nazi group meeting

Budapest, 22/11/09 - Police in riot gear broke up a recruiting meeting of the outlawed neo-Nazi Hungarian Guard. Some 50 uniformed guardsmen were on hand last Friday at a beer hall at Csepel, a poor industrial suburb of the Hungarian capital, when some 200 police arrived to break up the meeting to launch a national recruitment campaign. The commander of the Guard called for reinforcement, and some 400 guardsmen were rushed to the scene, but diplomatic bargaining ended the confrontation. Police made three arrests. A landmark court ruling earlier this year banned the paramilitary Guard, the private army of the extreme nationalist Jobbik Party. The Guard displays the colors and marches to the tunes of the defunct Arrow Cross, a Hungarian movement that murdered thousands of Jews, Gypsies and political dissidents during the Holocaust. The ruling also banned the uniform. Csepel council members are organizing an all-party motion to reinforce an earlier local government decision declaring the Guard "unwelcome" in the district. This follows a brawl last week at Sajobabony in the impoverished northeast of Hungary where hundreds of Guardsmen and their supporters clashed with Gypsy residents outraged by racist attitudes expressed at a Jobbik public meeting. Krisztina Morvai, a Jobbik deputy at the

European Parliament who occasionally wears the Guard uniform, says the Guard's style innocently reflects Hungarian folk culture. Morvai was scheduled to address a London conference in December organized by the Palestinian Return Centre, but her invitation was withdrawn last week when her extremist attitudes on race relations became known.

Source: <http://jta.org/news/article/2009/11/22/1009338/hungarian-guard-mounts-recruitment-campaign>

### **Slovenia: government commission confirms draft Programme for Roma**

Ljubljana, 23 November (STA) - The government Roma Community Protection Commission confirmed on Monday the draft national strategy for the Roma for 2010-2015. Municipality associations and Roma organisations can now send their comments on the document to the Government Office for Nationalities, Education Minister Igor Luksic said after the session. Daily Dnevnik comments on Tuesday the drafting of a national strategy for the Roma by a government commission, saying the long-awaited document indeed addresses some of the key elements in the vicious circle of the Roma issue. However the paper also sees potential problems in its implementation

Source: <http://www.sta.si/en/vest.php?s=a&id=1452048> and <http://www.sta.si/en/vest.php?s=a&id=1451844>

### **Czech regret over sterilisation**

Prague, 22/11/09 - The Czech government has expressed regret over the illegal sterilisation of Roma women. Measures were being introduced to stop the practice being repeated, said Human Rights Minister Michael Kocab. Coercive sterilisation was allegedly used to curb the traditionally high fertility rate among the Roma. The practice officially ended with the collapse of Communism in Czechoslovakia in 1990, but rights groups say the last recorded case was as recent as 2003. Mr Kocab said health facilities should make sure women gave their informed consent before they were sterilised. The Czech Human Rights League said that the government expression of regret was insufficient, and demanded financial compensation for those women affected. But government human rights commissioner Jan Litomisky said: "The government does not apologise to the women because it refuses to shoulder responsibility for individual mistakes that it by no means initiated." He said the responsibility lay with individual doctors who performed the sterilisations, the Czech news agency CTK reported.

Full story: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8375960.stm>



The European Roma Information Office (ERIO) is an international advocacy organization, which promotes political and public discussion on Roma issues by providing factual and in-depth information on a range of policy issues to the European Union institutions, Roma civil organizations, governmental authorities and intergovernmental bodies. ERIO cooperates with a network of a large number of organizations and acts to combat racial discrimination and social exclusion through awareness raising, lobbying and policy development.

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