
COVID-19 Coronavirus: EU Commission and Council of Europe on Roma, “protection of human rights and access to services during pandemic”

“Governments need to be supported by all in the management of this crisis, and they must be free to decide on the necessary measures. However, all measures must respect the existing European human rights framework, including the principles of equality and non-discrimination”. This is according to a joint statement issued by the Council of Europe and the European Commission to mark today’s International Roma Day. There are 10-12 million Roma in Europe, and too many of them still suffer from poverty and exclusion. “I am concerned”, said Council of Europe Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić, “by reports that some European countries have adopted measures that could result in further compromising the human rights of Roma and hampering their equitable access to the provision of basic public services, most importantly health care, sanitation and even fresh water”. European Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli, for her part, is concerned that “online hate speech and fake stories against Roma people are” currently on the rise. This makes the “reinforced strategy for Roma equality and inclusion in European society”, on which the EU Commission is currently working, all the more necessary. The Council of Europe and the Commission come together today to call for “greater efforts” to “ensure that Roma people are included in society and that they have equal access to the basic needs, thus ensuring their protection” against the COVID-19 infection. “If there can be anything more contagious than a virus, it is our solidarity. Europeans need to stand up for each other”.

Valentina Bombelli