



Members of the European Parliament

**Ms Ursula Von Der Leyen**

President of the European Commission  
European Commission  
Rue de la Loi 200  
1049 Bruxelles

Re: Misuse of the European Social Funds to fuel antigypsyism in Bulgaria

Brussels  
06 October 2020

**To President Von Der Leyen**

CC: VP Vera Jourova, Commissioner Johannes Hahn, Commissioner Helena Dalli, Commissioner Didier Reynders, Commissioner Ylva Johansson

Honourable President,

We, Presidents of the European Parliament's Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup, would like to one more time express our gratitude for your commitment to combatting racism in the European Union.

There is a specific aspect of this fight that we must highlight this time, triggered by the news about Bulgarian Ministry of Interior that stigmatized an entire community by using a 1.7 million euro project funded by the European Social Fund. The project trained 480 police officers on how to identify the "radicalization" among Roma in Bulgaria and the final conference implicitly sent a message that Roma are a threat to the national security. Roma are not extremists or terrorists. Roma are the largest and the most discriminated against ethnic group in the EU and we need their rights to be respected.

Institutional racism takes different shapes, including using EU funds for stigmatization of an entire community!

European Parliament resolution of 17 September 2020 on the implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies: combating negative attitudes towards people with Romani background in Europe (2020/2011(INI)) insists that "entities that engage in discriminatory practices against Romani people, or take decisions or implement measures to this effect, should not be eligible for funding from the Union's budget". Therefore we ask the European Commission to investigate this case, recover the funds used, as well as deny any future funding support to the Bulgarian Ministry of Interior and other project partners, until a proactive anti-racist approach becomes a value the Bulgarian institutions reflect in their practices and policies.

**European Parliament Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup (ARDI)**

ASP 2G302 · EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT · RUE WIERTZ, 60 · 1047 BRUSSELS · BELGIUM

Racism, xenophobia and related intolerance are incompatible with the values of the EU and must be clearly and loudly condemned within our institutions. When the institutions are the perpetrators, even more so.

For more information, please see a letter from 'Citizens for Democracy and Rule of Law' Coalition attached to this email. In their letter, the citizens also ask the Commission to answer some important concrete questions. This case should be investigated seriously. We also hope that the concerns expressed in this letter will be taken into consideration for the next funding period of 2021-2027 and any other relevant future EU policy in order to avoid reinforcement of institutional and structural racism against any racialised community.

Yours sincerely,  
Members of the European Parliament

**ARDI Presidents:**

Romeo Franz, Greens/EFA

Peter Pollak, EPP

Cornelia Ernst, GUE/NGL

Younous Omarjee, GUE/NGL, Chair of REGI Committee

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