

PRESS STATEMENT

Urgent action needed to stop racial hatred and anti-Gypsyism

Brussels, 22 April 2016

The European Roma Information Office (ERIO) expresses its deep concern over the most recent case of racism and hate crime against Roma in Bulgaria. On 18 April 2016 in the village of Ovchepoltsi, near the southern Bulgarian town of Pazardzhik, a 17-year-old Roma boy was beaten and humiliated after saying he was “equal” to a non-Roma. While beating the Roma teenager, the perpetrator filmed its actions. As soon as ERIO received the video¹, we immediately informed the relevant authorities and institutions about the case. The video is a clear example of brutal racism against Roma and of what is happening today in Europe against this group.

Superiority feelings of mainstream society towards Roma, minorities and migrants can be destructive and despite this, they are becoming pervasiveness in European societies. Unfortunately, this is not an isolated case neither in Bulgaria nor in other countries across the EU. We can observe increasing anti-Roma sentiments and anti-Gypsyism as well as persistent patterns of violent attacks and racial hatred that many Roma face in their everyday life. The racist perpetrator’s behaviour was triggered by his denial of being “equal” to the Roma teenager, sharing the same race, the same nationality, the same living district and most probably, the same education.

Anti-Gypsyism is widespread across Europe. EU anti-racism and anti-discrimination directives or national equality laws are not enough to eliminate this destructive trend. EU’s current priority is the issue of insecurity and terrorism. However, the EU is paying less attention to terrorism against Roma and other visible minorities which is as dangerous as any other forms of terrorism.

We call on all responsible institutions to take urgent actions against the inhuman act against this Roma youngster. Racism and anti-Gypsyism are worrying rising trends, worsen when they are tolerated and not persecuted. We urge civil society to respond and react adequately to this case which illustrates the many other unknown and unreported ones.

Ivan Ivanov, ERIO Executive Director

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Note to the editor:

The European Roma Information Office (ERIO) is an international advocacy organisation which promotes political and public discussion on Roma issues by providing information to the EU institutions, civil society and governments. Through its wide network, it aims to combat racist discrimination against Roma through awareness raising, lobbying and policy development.

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¹ Video: https://www.dropbox.com/s/1usdkdte1qmp8q3/Roma%20incident_Bulgaria%202016_ENG%20subs%20updated.mp4?dl=0