

ERGO Network – Response to the AgoraEU Regulation (2028–2034)

ERGO Network welcomes the objectives of the proposed AgoraEU Programme and the effort to bring together culture, media, rights, equality, and democratic participation into one framework. However, the Regulation in its current form does not sufficiently ensure that the Programme will reach Roma communities, Europe’s largest and most marginalised minority, nor does it operationalise the EU’s existing commitments under the EU Roma Strategic Framework 2020–2030.

Although the Regulation acknowledges discrimination against minorities “including Roma”, it does not include **concrete funding priorities, mechanisms, or indicators** that would ensure impact for Roma. Given persistent antigypsyism, exclusion, and structural inequalities, Roma cannot be adequately supported through broad anti-discrimination calls alone. ERGO therefore recommends several key improvements.

1. Need for Targeted and Earmarked Funding

Roma civil society organisations continue to face major barriers accessing EU funding. Generic funding strands do not address the scale of antigypsyism or the capacity gaps among grassroots Roma organisations.

ERGO recommends:

- **dedicated and earmarked funding within the CERV+ strand** for Roma equality, community empowerment, and the fight against antigypsyism;
- multiannual support for Roma-led organisations to ensure continuity and long-term impact.

Such earmarking is necessary to translate EU policy commitments into practice.

2. Explicit Naming of Antigypsyism

The proposal lists several targeted forms of racism and intolerance, yet **antigypsyism is not explicitly mentioned**, despite being officially recognised by the EU as a specific and structural form of racism. Including antigypsyism in the Regulation would strengthen clarity, visibility, and accountability.

3. Ensure Access Through Small-Grant Mechanisms

Roma grassroots organisations are often unable to meet administrative and co-financing requirements. Without a dedicated mechanism, the **Programme will reinforce existing inequalities in access to EU funding.**

ERGO proposes:

- simplified **small-grant schemes**,
- low or zero co-funding requirements,
- lighter application and reporting procedures.

These tools are essential to ensure that Roma organisations, especially at local level, can meaningfully participate.

4. Mainstream Roma Inclusion Across All AgoraEU Strands

Roma inclusion should not be limited to the rights and equality components. Structural exclusion affects cultural expression, media representation, and civic engagement. Therefore, actions targeting Roma communities should be present across all three strands:

Culture strand: Roma artists, cultural heritage, mobility schemes, and contemporary cultural expression need visibility and support to counter underrepresentation and protect Europe's diverse cultural fabric.

MEDIA+ strand: Roma are often misrepresented or excluded from mainstream media. Supporting Roma journalists, positive storytelling, and projects countering anti-Roma hate speech and disinformation is essential to strengthen democratic resilience.

CERV+ strand: Roma communities face significant barriers to democratic participation. Targeted initiatives supporting civic engagement, youth involvement, and anti-racism work are essential for strengthening participation and combating antigypsyism.

Mainstreaming Roma inclusion across all strands reflects the reality that Roma marginalisation spans cultural, civic, and informational domains.

5. Monitoring, Indicators, and Participation in Governance

To ensure that Roma communities benefit meaningfully from the Programme, ERGO recommends:

- inclusion of **Roma-disaggregated indicators** in monitoring and evaluation;
- **annual reporting** on how much AgoraEU funding reaches Roma beneficiaries;

- **Roma participation** in advisory or monitoring structures.

These measures will increase transparency, strengthen EU accountability, and ensure alignment with the EU Roma Strategic Framework.

Conclusion

AgoraEU has the potential to be an impactful and coherent programme for democracy, culture, media, and rights. To fulfil this potential, it must ensure that Roma, which have been consistently identified as one of the most disadvantaged groups in Europe, are not overlooked in its implementation.

By adding earmarked support, explicit reference to antigypsyism, accessible funding tools, mainstreamed inclusion across all strands, and strong monitoring mechanisms, the European Commission can ensure that the Programme delivers on its promise to uphold equality, participation, cultural diversity, and democratic values for all.

ERGO stands ready to collaborate to make this Programme a tool that genuinely reaches Roma communities and advances the EU's commitments to justice and equality.