

# Statement by First Vice-President Timmermans and Commissioner Jourová ahead of Roma Holocaust Memorial Day on 2 August

*“Ahead of the Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, we honour the memory of the hundreds of thousands of Roma victims of the Holocaust.*

*Around 500,000 Roma from all over Europe were killed by the Nazis and their collaborators, representing at least a quarter of their total population at that time. The dehumanisation of the Roma and other minorities was the first step in facilitating these heinous crimes. We must remember this today and defend forcefully and passionately our shared European values of equality and non-discrimination.*

*The Roma are forgotten victims of the Holocaust for many Europeans. Remembering their historical persecution reminds us of the need to tackle the challenges which they still face today and which are too often overlooked. Seven decades on, Sinti and Roma still face hatred, violence, discrimination and racism on a daily basis. And many still do not have access to basic necessities such as decent housing, education and healthcare.*

*It is the duty of all EU Member States to ensure effective policies for the remembrance of historical atrocities, to safeguard and preserve historic sites, and to promote education and research in this field. And it is the duty of each and every one of us in the EU to treat our fellow citizens with dignity and respect, in particular the most vulnerable ones in our society.”*

## **Background**

Every year on 2 August, the European Commission pays tribute to the memory of the Roma victims of the Holocaust and reaffirms its unwavering commitment to counter antigypsyism, antisemitism, racism, and other forms of intolerance.

In May 1944, the Nazis started to plan the “Final Solution” for the “Gypsy Family Camp” in Auschwitz. The initial date for the liquidation of the “Gypsy camp” was planned for 16 May 1944. When the SS tried to force the prisoners out of the barracks they faced a rebellion of Roma men, women and children, armed with nothing but sticks, tools and stones, and eventually the SS had to withdraw. Then, on 2 August 1944, the order came again and some 3000 Roma men, women, and children were exterminated in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau. An estimated 19,000 of the 23,000 Roma sent to Auschwitz died there.

This year on 2 August, European Commission officials will join a group of Roma Holocaust survivors and young Roma people in the former concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland. This commemoration, organised by the

Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, together with the Association of Roma in Poland, brings together 300 young Roma and non-Roma from 20 European countries to raise awareness on the Roma Holocaust.

The EU has long stressed the need for better Roma integration. The European institutions and every EU country have a joint responsibility to improve the living conditions and integration of the Roma. In 2011, the European Commission called for [national strategies for Roma integration](#). The 2017 midterm review took stock of the progress since the launch of the EU framework (see [press release](#)).

### **For more information**

[European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights' report: A persisting concern: anti-Gypsyism as a barrier to Roma inclusion.](#)

[Press Release on the number of Roma facing life like people in the world's poorer countries](#)

[Infographic on barriers to Roma inclusion](#)

[Press release on the evaluation of the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020](#)

[The European Platform for Roma Inclusion](#)

[ROMACT programme for local authorities](#)