



Renate WEBER, MEP, Romania

renate.weber@europarl.europa.eu

**To: Mr. Jacques BARROT, Vice-President of the European Commission
Responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security**

Bucharest, February 9, 2009

Dear Vice-President Barrot,

Xenophobia against Romanian citizens in Italy has escalated to worrisome proportions and took inadmissible manifestation forms, in recent years. Starting from crimes committed by individuals, while totally ignoring that criminality has neither citizenship, nor ethnicity, these cases were presented by the most part of the Italian mass-media as a proof of the danger Romanian citizens represent. This has contributed to the rise of xenophobia and racism against Romanian citizens living in Italy.

On their part, instead of acting to stop the racism wave, Italian authorities have perpetuated this situation, through the behaviour and speeches of their different representatives.

The measure of fingerprinting “nomads” - in fact, Roma ethnics living in camps situated on the outskirts of Italian cities – was strongly criticized at its time, and nobody was convinced by the justification of the Italian authorities, especially the one coming from the Internal Affairs Minister, Roberto Maroni, that it was an action preceding a large social measures package.

Based on statistics misconstrued and using a very ambiguous term regarding to the national origin of criminality in Italy, the Italian Foreign Affairs Minister, Franco Frattini was - In a recent interview for Radio 24 - drawing the conclusion that Romanian criminals convicted in Italy should carry their prison term in their country of origin, and that Romania must accept this, as proof of “European solidarity”¹. The same idea was presented in 2008 by prime-minister Silvio Berlusconi, but was rejected by the Romanian authorities.

¹ *«Io non direi che questi sono criminali rumeni - sottolinea il titolare della Farnesina -: un criminale è un criminale. Però ci sono dati statistici: la comunità rumena è quella dalla quale purtroppo viene una gran parte di quelli che commettono reati in Italia. Questi criminali devono scontare la pena nel loro Paese e la Romania deve accettare questo discorso. Sarebbe vera solidarietà europea, senza puntare il dito contro nessuno».*

However, the Italian public opinion is not informed by the Italian authorities on the real facts, such as that from a total of 58,000 people currently incarcerated in the Italian jails, Romanian citizens represent 5% (less than 2,800 persons are convicted or awaiting their trials). Furthermore, the Italian public opinion is not informed that the over 1 million Romanians in Italy are producing – through their work and taxes they pay – at least 1% of Italy's GDP, while the Romanian citizens under arrest or convicted of a crime represent only 0.278% of the total number of Romanians living in the Peninsula.

Under these circumstances, although inadmissible, it is not surprising that a senator of the Italy's Northern League, Piergiorgio Stiffoni, has stated that Romanian citizens are criminals specialized in rapes. But it is both surprising and unacceptable that a report conducted by members from the Radical Party, regarding ill-treatment of Romanian detainees in Italian jails, does not prompt to an adequate reaction of the Italian authorities.

I am openly expressing my full compassion to the victims of crimes, and I am a full supporter of the need for firm action from the Italian judicial authorities – within the limits of Italy's laws and of the European Convention on Human Rights – in order to convict criminals, regardless of their citizenship.

At the same time, I believe that public speeches and actions of the Italian authorities targeting Romanian citizens, as well as the mass media campaign against them, are practices that could and should be debated at European Union level, in accordance to article 6 from the EU Treaty.

1. Has the European Commission received from the Italian authorities the plan for social, living and educational measures targeting nomad camps' population, more than 5 months since the end of the fingerprinting campaign?
2. Is the European Commission aware of any other instances where authorities of one Member State have found it natural, have requested and have obtained that EU citizens coming from another Member State, convicted by the authorities of the state of residence, carry their prison term in the state of origin?
3. Is the Commission planning to ask the Italian authorities for a detailed report on the situation in Italy, with a view to clarify to which extent is Italy seriously and persistently breaching the principles mentioned in Art 6 of the EU Treaty?

Renate WEBER, MEP, Romania
PNL, ALDE